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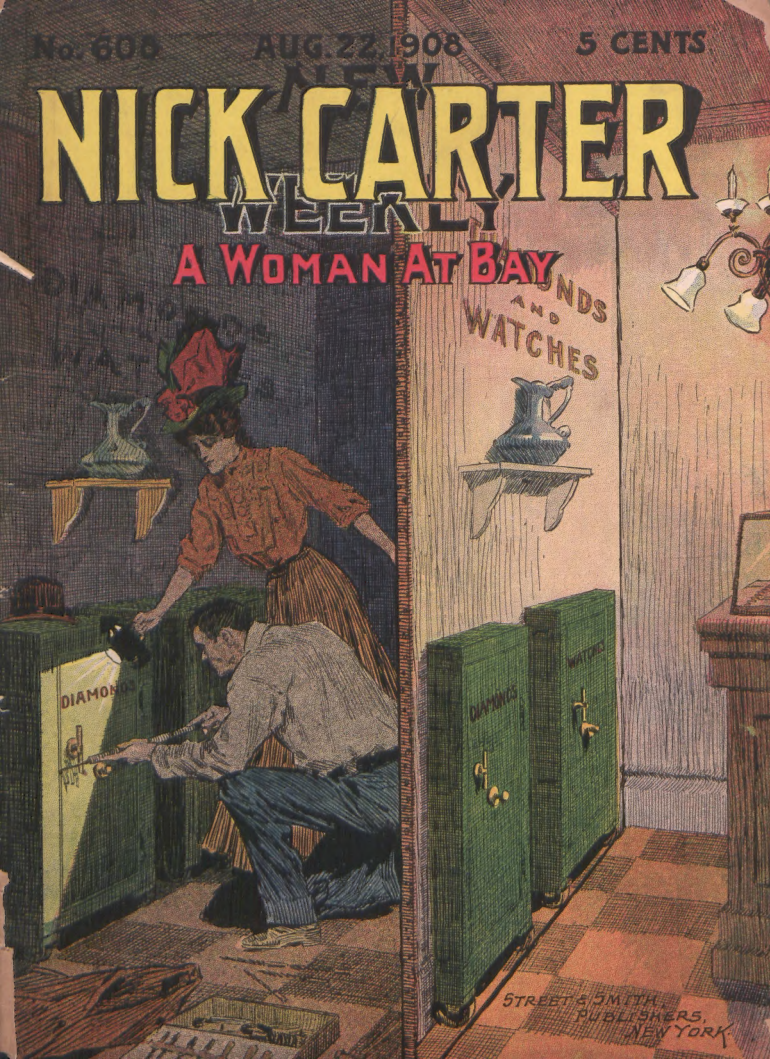
NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

A WOMAN AT BAY



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NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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A Woman at Bay;

OR,

NICK CARTER'S GREAT BURGLARY CASE.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER

CHAPTER I.

THE PLANNING OF A BURGLARY.

This is the story of the burglary, just as it happened, and as the particulars concerning it afterward became known to Nick Carter; but it is told here in the beginning, with full particulars as he later came to know about them, for the sake of continuity of incident, and in order that the reader may understand what he had to contend with.

The place that was burglarized is located on Broadway, in what is known as the "Great White Way," where pedestrians never cease to pass to and fro, no matter what the hour may be, no matter what is the condition of the weather.

The store was one of the smaller of the jewelry-stores along that section, although it was noted, by the frequenters of that portion of Broadway, as a place which always maintained an extraordinary display of diamonds and other precious stones.

No man in the city kept a better stock of diamonds than the proprietor of this modest establishment, whom we will call Mr. Abrams—which is not really his name. He prefers to avoid the unnecessary notoriety which the mention of his name in this story would involve; and besides, he had enough of that sort of thing immediately after the robbery occurred.

Abrams had been a lapidary in his younger days; now he was a dealer. As an expert, he was frequently consulted by other men who dealt in diamonds, and his opinion upon a stone was generally regarded as final.

Among those acquainted with the man and his career it was known that he was immensely rich, although he did not go in for display at all. But he had a class of customers which even the great firm of Tiffany might envy him.

It was known, also, that he always carried a very large stock of diamonds and other precious jewels, and that at night he deposited them inside the two large safes in his store.

Abrams had another peculiarity. He was distrustful of banks. It is true that he maintained an account in two different banks, but he never carried a large

balance in either of them. He preferred the security of his own safes in his own establishment.

Whenever his friends expostulated with him about this, he invariably replied:

"My big steel safes are more secure than the banks, these days. Banks fail and go into liquidation; they suspend. My safes do not. And fire? They are made to order, and more especially for safety against fire than anything else. Burglary? Oh, no. In the darkest night the street outside is as light—lighter, indeed, than day. I leave many lights in the store. The police pass frequently. Persons are passing all the time throughout the night. More than that, I have joined with several others in paying for the services of a special watchman who walks up and down along this block. Oh, no; a burglary could not be committed along this block—that is, successfully. And another thing: People do not know that I trust the safes rather than banks with my cash."

That was Abrams' complacent frame of mind. Now, as to the condition of the little store itself.

It was—is—quite narrow, having counters only along one side of it; but there is room left thereby for several chairs to stand along the wall, upon which waiting customers may be seated while the proprietor is otherwise engaged.

The space between the counter and the wall, where the chairs stand, is approximately fourteen feet; and the distance from the door to the end of the counter is, say thirty-three feet.

Two feet beyond the rear end of the counter there is a wood partition which extends upward half-way to the ceiling—that is to say, seven feet, and against this partition, with their backs toward it, stand the two safes already mentioned.

Each is six feet in height, and five feet across, and they have—or had—a depth of four feet.

At the hour of closing business for the day, the trays of diamonds and other precious stones on exhibition in the window and in the show cases are removed and placed inside the two safes where there are already other innumerable trays of the same sort stowed away.

Inside of one of the safes, in the very center of it, was another safe that was made a part of the greater one; but its door opened with a combination lock; and within this receptacle Abrams kept his cash—nobody had ever attempted to guess how much.

Now, our story begins with the entrance, one Monday morning, soon after the store was opened, of a handsome man, dressed in the height of fashion, who carried a camera swung by a strap over his shoulder.

As he approached the counter, Abrams stepped behind it, to wait upon him; and the man, who will be described later, announced:

"Good morning, Mr. Abrams. I wish to purchase a diamond ring of about one and three-quarters karats. This ring is the exact size of the lady's finger;" and he laid a small gold ring in Abrams' palm. "It is to be an engagement ring," he added, "so I would like to have as perfect a stone of that size as you can supply me."

Mr. Abrams exhibited several rings which answered to the requirements, and the man selected one of them, the price therefor being two hundred and seventy dollars.

The customer laid three one-hundred-dollar bills on the counter, and while Abrams was returning the trays to their several places, and while he made change for the payment, the customer began to look about him.

Presently there was a sharp "click!" that sounded through the establishment, and Abrams lifted his head, just as he heard his customer exclaim:

"Confound it!"

"Eh?" said Abrams. "What was that? What is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing, only I inadvertently pressed the catch that works the shutter of my camera. I have ruined a film, that is all."

A moment later he received the ring he had purchased, together with his change, and passed out of the store.

And now, anticipating these incidents, as before stated, we are privileged to follow that "gentleman" through some of his latter eccentricities of conduct.

He walked down Broadway until he arrived at Twenty-sixth Street, where he turned off the main thoroughfare, and presently let himself into a house with a key. There he ascended to the second floor, and entered the front, or alcove, room, where a woman was awaiting him with eager eyes; and eyes that were not only eager, but beautiful, as well, save for a certain quality of boldness which fairly lunged at you out of their black depths.

Her complexion was like rich cream; her features were perfect. When the man entered the room where she was waiting, she approached him with outstretched hands.

"Well?" she asked.

For reply, he inserted a finger and thumb in his waistcoat pocket, and removed a folded bit of tissue

paper—he had told Abrams he preferred the paper to a box—and placed it in her hand.

"There is your ring, Janice," he announced.

"Oh, bother the ring!" she replied, without even removing the paper from it. "What about the picture?"

"I have that, too."

"A successful one?"

"I cannot tell that until I have developed the negative."

"You can tell about the light, and whether you got a good shot at the safes, and the partition back of them."

"Oh, yes. I did both of those all right."

"Then the picture will be good."

"There is always the risk about imperfect films, you know, Janice."

She did not reply to that, but unfolded the tissue paper and began to inspect the ring.

"It is a beauty," she admitted finally.

"Yes. I paid two-seventy for it. It ought to be."

She slipped it upon her finger, gazed at it a moment in silence, and then, with some impatience, exclaimed:

"Well, aren't you going to develop that picture?"

"Yes. At once. My, how eager you are, Janice."

"Well, why not? I am anxious to get started in the other business, and we need capital to do that. This affair should supply the capital."

"I'm not so sure that we will do as well at the other business as if we continued at our present occupation," he replied. "I am not as great a man as my father was before me. He could hoodwink the customs officers, the detectives, and the whole world, and do it right before their eyes. While as for me——"

"You have not tried smuggling yet."

"No; that is true."

"And there is lots of money, as well as pastime, in it, Livingston."

"Uh huh! Wait here, Janice. I'll develop the film."

He retired then to another room, from which he emerged after half an hour, bearing in his fingers the developed film. In the other hand he carried a tray of water.

"Here it is," he said. "And it is perfect."

He held it to the light for her, and she gazed through it with eager eyes, her hands clasped, her manner tense.

"It *is* perfect," she said presently.

"Yes; I think so."

"It will be all we require to perform the rest of the work, won't it?"

"I think so."

"You *think* so! Don't you *know?*"

"Certainly, my dear. But don't forget that the greater part of the rest of the preparatory work devolves upon you."

"Oh, I can do my part, all right. You need not fear about that."

"If you do yours, I will do mine."

"Come, then. Let's get to work. You must go out and leave me. You must lay all your plans for the final coup while I am preparing the canvas."

"All right. Have you got everything in readiness?"

"Everything."

"It's a lucky thing that you are such a clever artist, Janice. I couldn't have done the thing at all without your help."

"Nor could I without yours."

"That is true enough. Say, how long will it take that business to dry hard enough for our purposes?"

"Several days, I suppose."

"Well, that will give me time enough. I will be ready when you are."

"And I will be ready when you are, too."

Then he went out upon the street again.

CHAPTER II.

THE WORK OF MASTER CRACKSMEN.

Whatever those arrangements were that the man was to make, we need not follow them in detail.

As for the black-eyed woman, she proved herself to be a talented artist during the days that followed, for she spent the time working upon a strip of canvas that was seven feet in height and fourteen feet in length, and which was stretched the entire length of the rear room of the suite they occupied, while she worked over it with her brushes and paints.

Beside her, as she worked, resting upon an easel, was an enlarged copy of the picture her companion had taken in the diamond merchant's store. It was evident that she was making a "life" size copy of it on the canvas.

* * * * * * *

There came a Monday morning when Mr. Abrams was seen to rush from his store into the street soon after he had entered it; but he came to a halt as soon as he had crossed the threshold, and passed one hand in a dazed sort of manner across his forehead. Then he turned and reentered the store, passing at once to

the telephone, only pausing long enough to relock the front door before he did so.

At the telephone he asked for connection with the headquarters of police, and, having obtained it, announced in tremulous tones:

"This is Mr. Abrams—the diamond merchant of Broadway—yes—you know my place?—yes—my safes have been broken open and robbed—I don't know; it might have happened Saturday night. I was not down here yesterday. . . . Yes. . . . Please come right away. . . . Oh, by the way, will you tell me the name of that great detective who is so successful? . . . Yes; that is the name. I recall it now. . . . And the address you say is. . . . All right. Thank you. . . . No; I will admit nobody to the store until after you have been here. In fact, there is no reason why I should do so. There is nothing left here to sell. . . . Carter is the name you gave me? . . . Thank you."

He waited a moment, and then called for the number that had just been told to him; and here again he gave out the same information, in substantially the same words he had used in talking to the officer at police headquarters.

Nick Carter, being nearer at hand than headquarters, arrived first upon the scene of the burglary; and it certainly was a sight long to be remembered.

While he peered through the glass door during the moment he waited for Abrams to open it, he could see nothing awry about the appearance of the establishment; but the moment he stepped inside he discovered that many things were wrong.

From beyond the front door, looking through the glass thereof, the partition that was supposed to cross the room two feet beyond the extremity of the counter seemed to be perfectly in place; the two big safes looked to be intact; there was nothing apparently wrong about anything.

But the moment he was inside the door he discovered that the thing that appeared to be the partition was in reality a strip of stretched canvas, cleverly painted to represent the partition; and what appeared to be the safes were nothing more than masterly reproductions of them, in oils, painted thereon with such genius as still to resemble them even when one stood quite close to the canvas.

"Please come this way," said Abrams excitedly; and he led the way around behind one end of the painted screen.

"Do you know," he said, stopping before he passed quite around it, "when I entered here, an hour ago, I discovered nothing wrong. I did not discover anything out of the way at all until I stood right here, and was fool enough to reach out my hand for that painted knob on that painted door." And he laughed immoderately at his own foolishness; for at the end of the space behind the counter there was a door through the partition, and this door had also been perfectly reproduced in paint, on the canvas.

Behind the painted screen which the burglars had provided for their purpose, the scene almost beggars description.

An entire section of the partition had been removed, extending from the extremity of one safe to the extremity of its companion, where they had originally stood.

The safes themselves had been drawn back into the rear room along the floor, where several pounds of lard had been smeared, to facilitate the work.

The backs of each safe had been entirely removed, and the contents taken from them. The drawers and trays they had contained were scattered about the rear room, many of them broken and splintered. The inner safe, that has already been mentioned, where the cash was kept, had been easily reached, for its back was the same as the back of the larger safe that accommodated it. It was not really an extra safe at all, having only three sides, and when the back of the larger safe came off, it exposed the interior of the smaller and inner one.

Abrams was white to the lips, but calm.

He opened his mouth to speak, when there came another summons at the front door, announcing the arrival of two men from headquarters.

"We thought we would find you here," one of them said to Nick Carter. "The commissioner told us that Abrams was going to send for you. Clean job, isn't it?"

"About the cleanest I ever saw," agreed the detective. "The cleverest, too."

"That screen-business is an old trick," said the central office man."

"Yes; but I never saw it so well done."

"Nor I. Looks like the work of——"

"Who?" asked Nick, when the central office man hesitated.

"Of an expert," finished the man; and Nick smiled.

"So it does," he admitted. "I thought you were going to give us a name."

"So I was. I was going to say that it looks like the work of Red Leary; only Red Leary has been dead a number of years."

"He was never clever enough to have done this, Mike."

"Don't you think so?"

"No; look at the work."

"I am looking at it."

"Look at these drill-holes."

"Sure. Gee, but there are a lot of them! I don't see how they did all that work in one night, Mr. Carter, do you?"

"That is just the point. They didn't."

"Eh? But they had to, didn't they?"

"Evidently not, since it was an impossibility. Have you counted the holes, Mike?"

"No."

"I have. There are thirty-six in one safe; thirty-seven in the other; that makes seventy-three drilled holes."

"Sure. So it does."

"And in order to drill all those holes as they *are* drilled, I figure it out that between seventy and a hundred actual hours must have been employed."

"Between seventy and a hundred—— Oh, I say, Mr. Carter. Gee-whiz! The minimum of that would be almost three full days, and the maximum would be almost more than four full days."

"Exactly. And you can bank upon it, Mike, that the burglars devoted just about that amount of time in this work."

"But, Mr. Carter—— Oh, say, tell me how you make it out that it could have been done in that way, will you?"

"Have you looked at the windows and doors, Mike?" asked the detective, smiling.

"No; not yet. I was coming to that later. But what's the use, if those fellows have been coming here night after night for a year or two?"

"It isn't quite so bad as that; but whoever did this work has been coming here night after night for some time."

"What about the windows and doors? Why did you ask that question?"

"Because not one of them shows any evidence of having been tampered with. If you search for the means by which the burglars entered here, you will not find it—unless you turn your attention to the same door by which you entered."

"Eh? Do you mean that they came in through the front door night after night? Is that what you mean?"

"It is the only way in which they could have done it."

"Are you sure?"

"Look for yourself. They could not have effected an entrance at the rear of the place without breaking something, and that would have been discovered after their first entrance. Wait a minute, though. There is perhaps another way that I had not thought about."

Nick Carter turned to the rear of the building, and began a careful examination of the window there, which was protected by an iron shutter, or blind, on the outside. And always this iron shutter was kept locked on the inside. The lock was there, in place, then.

They watched him curiously while he was thus engaged, in which occupation he persisted for a considerable time. Afterward he turned to Abrams.

"You rarely open this window, do you?" he asked.

"Never, only in the hottest weather, during the summer."

"Not even to admit the daylight?"

"No. There is very little daylight to enter through that way. There is no door to the rear of the building, as you see. I had it bricked up when I came here, years ago. And as for the window—well, for light, I preferred electricity. For daylight, I go to the front of the store."

"Exactly. Now, will you three gentlemen await me here, and promise to do nothing while I am gone? I will be absent only a few minutes."

They promised, and Nick asked Abrams to let him out at the front door. Then, after some trouble in finding an entrance, he went to the second floor of the building, and, explaining that he was an officer, received permission to let himself down into the tiny yard behind Abrams' store. This yard extended the width of the building, but was very shallow.

Once upon the ground, he approached the iron shutter that covered the window he had already examined on the inside.

There were several marks upon it which he at once discovered; and the discovery led to his indulging himself in a smile.

A few moments of careful inspection revealed the secret he sought, and presently he lifted one of the halves of the shutter clear of the building, at the hinged side of it, and swung it around noiselessly out of his way.

The window was thus exposed, and, after a moment of search, he opened the entire casing, upper and lower sash together, swung them outward, and then stepped through into the room where the others were awaiting him.

"How in thunder did they do it?" asked the man from the central office who had done all the talking before. The other one had been content to listen.

"Why," replied the detective, "they spent the first night in here—the time when they must have entered the front door with a key they had made—in preparing their way in and out. After that, I shouldn't wonder if they had a means of reaching the roof of this building—it is only three stories, you know—and letting themselves down from there into the yard behind. You might go up to the roof, Mike, and see what you can find there, while I keep busy here a little longer. After your return we will get back again to the time occupied in opening these safes."

"All right. I'll go."

"Look about you particularly for the means they used in reaching the roof, and for lowering themselves into the yard from it," said Nick.

CHAPTER III.

THE WAY THE BURGLARY WAS COMMITTED.

"Well, what did you find?" asked the detective, when the central office man returned.

"You're right about the roof, Mr. Carter."

"Oh, I did not doubt that. But what did you find? Tell me in detail."

"I'll tell you first what I didn't find. I didn't find out how they got *to* the roof, but I guess we can worry that out later on; eh?"

"I think so. Go on."

"They got down into the yard by the simplest manner possible—a rope ladder. At least, I should surmise that, from the fact that I found where I thought such an arrangement had been fastened to the roof."

"Yes. That is doubtless the way they did that. But we must find how they got *to* the roof. We will look that up later on. Anything else?"

"A couple of butts of cigars, ditto of cigarettes, and——" He hesitated, then added: "That is all. There was nothing else."

Nick noticed the hesitation, and looked at the man sharply; but he said nothing at the time.

"What else have you ferreted out since I've been away?" asked the central office man.

"I haven't been doing much searching," replied the detective. "I have been thinking."

"That is equivalent to the same thing—with you, isn't it?"

"Sometimes."

"Well, Mr. Carter?"

"I have been figuring out the number of hours that were employed in effecting an entrance here."

"Good. What do you make of it?"

"This: I told you a while ago that I believed the burglars must have consumed between seventy and a hundred hours of actual work here, in order to drill all those holes."

"Yes."

"To that we must add an extra night—the first one—used up in the work on that window. That would have consumed at least one whole night."

"I should say so."

"Well, to be on the safe side of the figuring, we will say that they were about two weeks, or nearly that, in accomplishing what they did."

"Hold on a minute. How many hours a night could they work? If they began at the usual time for their talent, they would——"

"But they didn't. It wasn't necessary. They could have put in at least six, probably seven, and sometimes eight, hours a night at their work."

"I don't quite see how you make that out."

"Easily. Abrams closes this store every night at six o'clock. He never comes here in the evening; do you, Abrams?"

"No, sir."

"By ten o'clock, after they prepared their passage through the rear of the store, it would be safe enough for them to begin work."

"If they could get in here by that time, yes."

"They could get here before that, if they had chosen to do so. You must admit that. I even think that they might have begun their work at nine o'clock, at times."

"Well?"

"And they really would not have to knock off before six in the morning, would they?"

"Perhaps not."

"This store doesn't open before eight. The only danger in leaving here in the morning was in the fact that they might be seen ascending to the roof. But it does not get light till after six, even now. The building at the rear is a blank wall. The windows directly above us were the only ones they had to fear."

"I guess that's right, too."

"So I think they had seven or eight hours a night in which to drill all their holes."

"But why should they drill so many, Mr. Carter?"

"My dear fellow, if they had attempted to blow either of those safes with one blast, or two, or three, or four, the noise of it would have been heard—well, a good ways. They could not have muffled the sound sufficiently for their purposes."

"No; I suppose not."

"Besides, they wanted to make no mistake. It was essential that they should leave everything in the morning exactly as they found it when they arrived; and that was easy."

"Not so terribly easy, Mr. Carter."

"Look at that partition."

"Yes."

"After cutting it so they could remove that section, they fixed it so the joints they had made would not be noticed. When they came here they simply set that section of the partition aside, and began with their drills. When they were through—that is, when the hour approached the time for leaving until another night, they merely removed whatever débris they had collected, replaced the section of partition, and departed, leaving no trace whatever behind them. They went out through the window, closed it behind them, mounted the rope ladder, and—disappeared.

"The following night they came again, and continued their work; and they kept that up, night after night, until they were ready for the final coup."

"And that was the blasting part of it. That was when they used their explosives."

"Yes."

Nick pointed toward a heap of material that had been kicked carelessly into a corner. It was composed of many small wires, electric batteries, and there were old quilts enough to have covered many men against the cold of a winter's night.

"Your trained eye has taken all that in, I suppose?" he inquired dryly.

"Certainly."

"Has it also occurred to you that thirty-six or thirty-seven small explosions, following one another in rapid succession, would not make very much noise?"

"Yes."

"And also, has it occurred to you, Mike, that—take this safe, for instance—that if the first thirty-six explosions did not accomplish what was intended, it was an easy matter to fill the holes again, and do it all over?"

"I see. Yes."

"Their purpose was to avoid discovery, and still to attain the desired result."

"Sure."

"Time was no object. That is, not much of an object, for they had seven or eight hours, and to do this last part of the work they required not more than four or five, at the most."

"Yes."

"Well, they worked their way into one safe, and then into the other; or, to begin at the beginning, when they arrived here, Saturday night, or last night, whichever it was, their first care was to stretch the canvas in place, because they wished to draw the safes back into this room, and still leave the front store unchanged in appearance."

"That is a work of art; that canvas," said Mike.

"Yes. I am in some hope that it will aid us in the search for the burglars, although I do not place much faith in it. Now, to continue."

"Yes."

"Having put the canvas in place, they then removed the section of partition. Then they pulled the safes back into this room. Then they loaded the holes they had drilled, attaching wires and caps to them as they did so. Then they swaddled the safe to be blown in the quilts, and—surely you know the rest."

"It's a clean job, all right."

"It is likely that they were able to get away from here quite early that night; the night the blowing was done."

"They must have been obliged to make several trips to the roof with their plunder."

"Probably."

"Do you think it was done last night, Mr. Carter?"

"I cannot say as to that; and it makes no difference, anyway."

"Only that they wouldn't be quite as far away if it were done last night, as if they did it Saturday night."

"I don't think that will make any difference in the end, either. It may be many days before we pick up their trail."

The detective turned toward the proprietor, who had been an attentive listener to all this.

"How much do you suppose you have lost, Abrams?" he asked.

"Oh, it is a fortune, Mr. Carter. There was a hundred and thirty thousand dollars in that inner safe; that one there."

"What? Did you leave so much as that in your safe here?"

"Yes."

"Were you in the habit of doing that?"

"Yes. It has always been my habit. I was never robbed before."

"Humph! I could almost say that you deserved to have been robbed long ago. How much have you lost in other things?"

"It will mount up to very much more than half a million, altogether, sir."

"So much?"

"Yes, sir."

"The safes are cleaned out, certainly.

"They have not left a thing behind them that was worth taking away," said the dealer lugubriously.

"Mr. Carter, how many men do you suppose there were in this burglary?" asked the man from the central office.

"One," replied Nick laconically.

"Eh? Oh, say! One man couldn't have done this thing all alone."

"I did not say that he was alone, Mike."

"But you said there was only one, didn't you?"

"One man, yes; two persons. One of them was a woman, Mike."

"A *woman!*"

"Yes."

"What makes you think that?"

"I found the print of half of a woman's hand—the finger half—in the rust on the outside of that shutter. The size and shape of it makes me feel certain that it was made by a woman. That is all I have to go by, as to that; but I think this burglary was committed by a man and a woman working together."

"They were sure onto their job, all right."

"Yes."

"But it doesn't seem as if a woman would have the grit to come here, night after night, as they had to do, and work right along with a man in this business."

"Doesn't it? My experience has told me that women, as a rule, have more nervous courage than men. It is brute strength which renders men self-reliant. However, we need not go into that. When we leave here, Mike, I wish you would walk home with me. I want to talk to you."

"All right. I'll leave my side-partner here to look after the place."

CHAPTER IV.

AN IMPORTANT CLUE.

Nick Carter strode along in utter silence for a time after he and the man from the central office left Abrams' store. But presently, very quietly, he asked:

"Mike, what else, besides the things you told me about, did you find on the roof of that house?"

He could feel that the man gave a slight start, and that for an instant he hesitated to answer; but it was only an instant, for then, with a laugh, he shoved one hand into his pocket, brought it forth, palm upward, and replied:

"This."

The "this" proved to be a diamond ring, apparently new, and was, without doubt, Nick thought, part of the plunder the burglars had taken from the safes.

"You weren't going to keep it, were you, Mike?" asked the detective, smiling.

"No. Of course not. Only I thought—well, to tell you the truth, I forgot entirely the fact that the ring might be a part of the plunder. It occurred to me that possibly it might have dropped off a finger of one of the robbers. You know there was a rope ladder to climb."

"Yes. But this ring is too small for a man, isn't it? And besides, it is a lady's ring."

"Well, wasn't one of the burglars a woman, according to your own idea?"

"Yes. Had you also jumped at that conclusion?"

"The ring suggested it to me. I thought I was going to have a clue that you did not find, you see."

"Yes, I see. Will you permit me to keep the ring? I will return it to Abrams."

"Sure."

Nick dropped the ring into one of his pockets, and, a little later, when Mike left him, he turned and retraced his steps to Abrams' store.

"Abrams," he said, after he had called the storekeeper aside, "do you think you could identify your property if you should see any of it?"

"Oh, I don't know as to that, Mr. Carter," was the reply. "There is much of it that I would be able to identify instantly; and there is a great deal of it which would defy identification on my part."

"What about this ring? Do you recognize it as one that you owned?"

The jeweler took the ring in his hand and studied it closely, and as he did so he uttered a little exclamation of surprise.

"What is it?" asked Nick. "What interests you?"

"This ring."

"Is it one of yours?"

"It was one of mine—once. I sold it—let me think a moment—just about a month ago."

"What's that?" asked Nick, instantly interested. "What is that you said?"

"This ring was in my stock a month ago. About that time I sold it to a customer for two hundred and seventy dollars."

"Did you sell it to one of your regular customers?" Nick asked the question quietly, and apparently without much interest, although he was in fact greatly concerned.

"No; not to a regular customer."

"Some one whom you know, then?"

"No; not even that."

"A stranger?"

"Yes."

"Man or woman?"

"I sold it to a man; a gentleman who wanted it for an engagement ring, so he told me. I remember that he was very particular that the stone should be without a flaw."

"Can you describe the man?"

"I think so."

"Try it."

"He was rather tall; considerably taller than you are, I should say. He was rather handsome, I thought at the time, of athletic build, perfectly dressed, faultless in manner and address, light complexion, hair somewhat wavy over the temples; a man of about thirty, I should say. Really, I did not know that I had remembered him so well."

"It happened about a month ago, you say?"

"Yes; three or four weeks ago; possibly nearer three than four."

"How did the man conduct himself while he was in your store?"

"Faultlessly."

"Did anything happen while he was there?"

"Not that I now recall."

"Did he come again, or had he been there before?"

"No; I had never seen him before that time, and I do not remember to have seen him since."

"Did he carry a parcel, or anything at all in his hands?"

"No; but wait a moment. I remember now that he had a camera with him. It was slung over one shoulder by a strap."

"A *camera!*"

"Yes. You seem interested in the man, Mr. Carter."

"Just now I am interested in everything connected with your business."

"May I ask where you got that ring?" asked Abrams.

"No; not now. Let me do all the asking for the present."

"Very well, sir."

"Did the customer who purchased this ring make use of his camera while he was in your store?"

"No; certainly not."

"Was it light enough in there at the time to have taken a picture?"

"The afternoon sun was shining in at the window. There are low buildings opposite me, you know."

"Yes. Are you quite sure that the camera did not click while he was there?"

"Oh, yes. It clicked once. I remember that now."

"So it *did* click just once, eh?"

"Yes."

"Tell me about that click, and how you happened to notice it."

"When he paid me for the ring he gave me three one-hundred-dollar bills. The price was two-seventy. I had returned the tray to the safe, and was making change, when I heard a sharp click, and the gentleman exclaimed: 'Confound it!' I asked him what was the matter, and he replied that he had inadvertently released the shutter to his camera, and had spoiled a film. That is all."

"Is it? Well, it is quite enough, too."

"What do you mean by that, Mr. Carter?"

"I mean that, when the camera snapped, the man had taken a picture of the partition with the two big safes in front of it. He had provided himself with a photograph of the rear end of your store, and it was probably from that picture, enlarged, that the canvas strip was painted."

"Do you mean that, Mr. Carter?"

"I certainly do mean it."

"You think that the purchase of the ring was only a blind, to aid him in obtaining the picture?"

"Yes."

"He paid a good price for it—two hundred and seventy dollars—didn't he?"

"Isn't the ring worth that much?"

"Yes. Most dealers would have charged three hundred."

"Then the man got his money's worth, didn't he?"

"Assuredly."

"Well, in that case, he did not really pay anything for the picture. He merely exchanged some cash for its equivalent in an article that could be readily turned into cash again."

"That is quite true, sir."

"That is the size of it."

"But why should he have gone to all that trouble to obtain the picture? He could have purchased five dollars' worth of anything I had, and accomplished the same purpose."

"He wished to allay anything like suspicion on your part."

"Well, he certainly did that."

"Was the man alone?"

"Quite so."

"Are you sure that a woman was not waiting for him outside the store?"

"If one was in waiting, I did not see her."

"Did he give you his name?"

"No."

"He was not here long?"

"No. That ring was the third one I showed him. He wasn't in the store fifteen minutes."

"Did he have any beard on his face?"

"No. He was smooth shaven. He wore eye-glasses, too, I remember now."

"Of course, he did not mention any address."

"No."

"Well, Mr. Abrams, there isn't any doubt in my mind that the man to whom you sold this ring is the same one who drilled your two safes; and the woman for whom he purchased the ring was with him when he did it. More than that, she lost the ring off her finger on the roof of the building, when they were escaping from here after the robbery, or when on one of their previous trips here, while the drilling was going on."

"Dear me! It seems incredible. You found the ring on the roof, then?"

"No. I was not up there, but I am going there now. Mike found it. I will keep the ring for a time, if you don't mind."

"You may keep it always, so far as I am concerned. It is not mine, Mr. Carter. I sold it and received its full value. Until you can restore it to the rightful owner, it is yours."

"Mike's, rather. However, I will retain it for the present. Now, Mr. Abrams, I want you to help me roll up that strip of canvas. It contains quite a work of art, which I think I will preserve for a while."

After the strip was rolled together, Nick stood it in a corner, and left it while he visited the roof of the building; but a half-hour later he returned, and, picking it under his arm, was turning away, when Abrams asked him:

"Did you find anything more up there, Mr. Carter?"

"No more diamonds, if that is what you mean," replied the detective.

"No. That is not what I meant."

"Well, yes, I found something. I discovered that somebody who has been living on the top floor, three doors below here, has been in the habit of visiting the roof frequently. I have no doubt of their purpose in doing so, either. They left a very excellent rope ladder behind them when they went away. But I am going back, to search the room more definitely later. I have given directions that it shall not be disturbed."

"The burglars seem to have been planning this robbery for a considerable time, Mr. Carter, don't you think so?"

"All burglaries that are worthy of the name, or that are successful, are planned months ahead; sometimes years in advance of the time they are committed," replied the detective.

CHAPTER V.

NICK CARTER MEETS WITH A SURPRISE.

With the long roll of canvas under his arm, Nick sought the studio of an artist friend, for he wanted information.

It was one of Nick Carter's principles to seek always the source of the best information, just as in the trial of a case of fact before a court, only the best evidence is admitted.

He is not one of those wiseacres who believe they know it all, and that no person is capable of telling him anything. It is true that he possessed a wide range of general knowledge; but, nevertheless, most of it is superficial; very little of it, compared with the duties he had to perform, is technical.

Every man has his specialty. There is always something that one man can do better than his neighbor. Nick Carter's specialty was "finding out things," and by long practise he had discovered that the best way to find out things was to apply to a man who made a specialty of that particular thing he wished to know about.

Therefore, in the present case he sought his artist friend.

"Hello, Radcliffe," he called out, as he entered the studio with the roll under his arm. "Do I really find you at work? I had an idea that you never worked, unless the wolf was actually gnawing a hole through the door."

"Howdy, Nick? Well, it is a bore, this thing we call work. I think, if it were some other name, I would not dislike it nearly so much. But work! Faugh! It makes me tired before I begin; and yet I am actually at it to-day."

"So I see."

"What in the world have you got under your arm, Carter? Is it a tent?"

"No. It's a work of art."

"A work of—what?" asked the artist mildly.

"Sure," replied Nick. "A work of art. Catch hold of the end, will you, and help me to straighten it out?"

And so, while Radcliffe held one end of the canvas and walked slowly backward toward the opposite end of the studio, Nick walked in the other direction, unrolling it as he went.

"Now, make your end fast somewhere, Radcliffe," said the detective. "I will do the same with this end. We can hang it right over those daubs of yours, on the wall, for the present, eh?"

"I like your cheek. Yes. There are some thumbtacks in the easel-board, behind you."

And so presently the canvas was fairly well stretched along the wall, and the two men stepped back to view it.

"Well, upon my word!" exclaimed Radcliffe.

"Fine bit of work, isn't it?" asked Nick.

"Yes. It's all right. But why in the world——"

"You are wondering, I suppose, what the object of it can be; eh?"

"Yes; but that is not what I was on the point of remarking. However, you might tell me what it is, old chap."

"I'll tell you that presently, Radcliffe. Just now I want to trace it. I want to ask you a few questions about it."

"What I cannot understand," murmured the artist, as if he had not heard what the detective was saying, "is why she should select so prosaic a subject as that one."

Nick was so amazed by the remark of the artist that he remained staring at him for a moment without speaking. Then he exclaimed the one word:

"*She!*"

"Why, yes, certainly," replied the artist, still studying the canvas, and not heeding the interest that the detective was showing. "I call it a prostitution of her talent, don't you, old chap?"

Nick had recovered from the effects of his surprise by this time, and now he answered in a mild tone of voice, and without betraying the interest he felt in the subject:

"So you recognize the work, do you?"

"Certainly. No one could mistake it who had ever seen any of her work."

"Who is the artist, Radcliffe? That is one thing that I wished to ask you when I brought the canvas here. Eh? Who is she?"

"Well, Nick, while I know perfectly well who she is myself, I don't exactly know how I can tell you."

"No? Why not?"

"Oh, it isn't from any reluctance to do so, old man. It is because she is really a sort of mystery."

"Is that so? You are more and more interesting."

"Tell me what there is about that picture of a partition wall with two big safes in front of it, to interest you."

"Oh, I'll explain all that presently. For the present, let it go at the fact that I am interested in the work, and that I wish to find the artist who painted it."

"I guess that is much easier said than done."

"Who is she, Radcliffe?"

"As I said a moment ago, I don't exactly know how to tell you that. She is a sort of mystery. I said that, too, didn't I?"

"Yes."

"If you are really interested, I'll tell you all I know about her."

"I am. I wish you would do so."

"Well, her first name is Janice, and I haven't the slightest idea what her other name is. We artists used to call her 'La Jan-eee.' See? With the accent on the last syllable of the name. She used to be a model, and she lived in Paris. She has posed for me over there a good many times. I heard—let me see, it was three, or four, or half a dozen weeks ago, I think—that she had been seen in this country; in this city, in fact; so I suppose, particularly since you are in possession of this specimen of her work, that she is here somewhere now."

"Yes," replied Nick dryly, "I think she is; or, at least, she was somewhere here not so very long ago."

"Uhuh."

"But you speak of her as a model. I didn't know that models also painted pictures."

"Oh, she did. She always did. She had a natural talent for it, and, going about among the artists as much as she did, she received a great deal of haphazard instruction, you know; she was taught how to mix colors, and all that. I have heard it said that

she was a wonder, and, indeed, I have seen three or four specimens of her work that made me think so myself."

"Can you give me any sort of a description of her, Radcliffe?"

"Why, yes. She is very dark and also very beautiful—if you admire the rather bold type of beauty. She posed for my Delilah, you know. She is exactly that type; or, rather, as one would imagine it."

"You should have a sketch of her somewhere about if she has posed for you."

"Bless you, I have a score of them. Wait; they are in an old portfolio in my storeroom. I will get it."

He was gone for a moment, and returned with a huge portfolio that was bound at the edges with braid tied in knots, and this he laid open on a table and began to run through the sketches it contained.

Presently he tossed one aside, so that it rested in front of Nick.

"There is one," he said. "And here, all the rest of the way to the bottom of the pile, are the others. Wait; there is one, or should be, that is a good one, and more finished than the others. Here it is. There! That is what I call a good picture of Janice."

It was done roughly, in oil; and hurriedly; but still, even without knowing the original, one could tell at once that it was an excellent likeness. Radcliffe had caught the expression of her face, and of her eyes, perfectly; and he had brought out the rich coloring of her skin with marvelous effect.

Nick carried it to an easel, and placed it so the light fell correctly upon it; then he drew back and stood for a long time studying it.

"Upon my word, Nick," said Radcliffe, at last, watching him, "one would think that you had seen La Janice somewhere, and fallen in love with her, clear up to your eyes. Is it a case of that, old chap? Because, if it is, you are not the first one, and if you should go out and shoot yourself because of her, you would not be the first to do that, either."

"What sort of a person is she, Radcliffe?" the detective asked, without replying to the question of his friend.

"Oh, as to that, I have nothing to say—except that she is merely heartless. Whether she is really bad or not, I really don't know; but that she is heartless, and that she was created without the quality of compassion, I can and will assert."

"That is a very pleasing outline of her character, Radcliffe."

"She worships one god, Nick—— No, I will change that. There are two."

"What are they?"

"Gold—that is money, of course; and diamonds."

"Eh? Diamonds?"

"They are her passion—or were. I don't suppose she has gotten over it."

"No; she has not gotten over it."

"Eh? I begin to think that you *have* really been up against her."

"Did you tell me a moment ago that some one told you she had been seen recently in this city?" asked Nick.

"Yes."

"Who was it? Who told you?"

"Sturtevant. Another artist. His studio is on this floor. But he has no more idea where she could be found than I have, if that is what you are after. He told me so. In fact, he made a considerable effort to find her, for he wanted her to pose for him, so he said; but he failed. He couldn't get a trace of her anywhere."

"Why didn't he follow her when he saw her?"

"Well, there was a good reason, or several of them. He had a lady leaning on his arm, for one thing, having just come out of the Metropolitan Opera House. Janice, he said, passed him, leaning on the arm of a tall, good-looking chap, who put her into a carriage and followed her, after which they drove away."

"And he tried to find her afterward?"

"Yes; and tried hard, too. He even advertised. But say, it is about time you told me something about that strip of canvas she painted."

The detective dropped upon a chair, and, with his eyes still upon the picture in front of him, replied:

"Before I do that, Radcliffe, I wish to be entirely positive that *she* painted it."

"There isn't the slightest doubt of it, Nick; but, nevertheless, there is a way in which I can prove it, if you like."

"How is that?"

"This: I never knew her to do a thing in oils that she did not put her private mark way down low, in the right-hand corner. It is just a diamond-shaped outline, with a small 'j' in the center of it," said Radcliffe, rising and approaching the canvas; and in an instant he turned and called out excitedly:

"See! Here it is! I knew that I was not mistaken."

And Nick Carter, rising, stepped forward and viewed the private mark, also.

CHAPTER VI.

ONE IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT.

"I don't want to shock you unnecessarily, Radcliffe," said the detective, when they had resumed their seats, "but if you care to hear the story of that strip of canvas, I'll tell it."

"Of course, I care to hear it."

"Well, then, at some time since sunset, Saturday night—and this is Monday, as you are aware—the store of Abrams, the diamond merchant on Broadway, was entered and robbed of about half a million in cash and jewels, and this strip of canvas that I have brought here to you played a very prominent part in the affair. That is the whole thing in a nutshell."

The artist only stared. He did not attempt to reply.

"When I brought that canvas to you, Radcliffe, it had not occurred to me that a woman painted it, although I was already aware of the fact that a woman had taken part in the burglary."

"Uhuh; go on."

"Neither did it occur to me, when I brought the canvas here, that you would recognize the work of the artist. I only thought that possibly you could assist me in tracing the canvas itself—the canvas on which the painting is done, and that by following it to the dealer who sold it, he might be able to direct me to the one who purchased it."

Radcliffe nodded.

"Such a large canvas as that one would be remembered by the man who sold it. At all events, that is the manner in which I figured it out, and I thought, through you, to get trace of the artist in that way. But it did not occur to me at all that you would not only recognize the work, but that you would have a likeness of the artist in your studio."

"And now, Nick, what are you going to do about it?"

"Why, I am going to search for your La Janice till I find her."

"I don't suppose there is the least doubt in your mind now that it was Janice who assisted at the burglary?"

"No; how could there be any doubt? There is the picture of the partition, with the two safes in front of it. But I haven't told you about that yet."

"No."

"There isn't much to tell, after all. The painted canvas was stretched across the store in front of the safes, and from the street it looked as though everything remained in position, while, in reality, the burglars—there were two of them—took down a section of the partition, and pulled the two safes into the back room, where they rifled them."

"Well, Nick, I haven't any sympathy for or with burglars, of course, but I will say this: If I had known beforehand why you wanted all the information I have given you, I wouldn't have told you."

"You don't mean to say, do you, that you would have protected a woman who had done such a thing as I have described?"

"Oh, I don't know. Possibly I might. Confound it all, she is a woman!"

"Oh, yes. She is also a burglar, and a very clever one."

"Well, I'll do the Pontius Pilate act; I'll wash my hands of the whole thing. But you need not ask for another word of information from me, for I shall refuse to give it. Moreover, if later you should call upon me to identify that canvas, or to repeat to others what I have told to you, I'll perjure myself rather than testify. Do you understand that?"

"Yes; but I shall not bother you in that respect. I won't have to."

"And again, if I should happen to run across Janice anywhere, or should hear where she is hiding, I shall consider it my duty to warn her."

Nick laughed pleasantly.

"All right, Radcliffe," he said. "I don't know as I blame you. After all, viewed from one standpoint, at least, she is a sort of old friend of yours; eh?"

"That's just the point. And more, I was one of the moths that burned my wings in the flame of her glances."

"In other words, you were once in love with her yourself?"

"Madly. I was crazy about her."

"I hope that you are not about to suffer a relapse. I trust it is all over now."

"Over? Good gracious, yes! It has been over for years. But don't you see that if I should appear in the light of aiding you, and she were caught, she would forever afterward think I was that sort of a cad who seeks revenge upon a woman?"

"I see. Yes."

"If you can catch her without me, I haven't the least objection; but I cannot raise another finger to help you, and I won't."

"All right."

"And more, if the chance offers for me to aid her to outwit you, I shall help her."

"You will become, in that case, an accessory after the fact, in the crime she committed."

"Oh, rats!"

Nick laughed.

"You're all right, Radcliffe," he said. "I'll promise not to call upon you for any more assistance; I'll promise not to ask you to testify to anything that has happened in this studio to-day; and I will further promise that Janice herself shall never know, through me, that I got trace of her through you."

"Will you do that, old chap?" cried Radcliffe.

"Yes. I have said so."

"Shake. You're a brick. Say, I understand now why you made that dry remark of yours when I told you how fond she is, or was, of diamonds. She got a big haul, did she?"

"About half a million, all told. Over a hundred thousand of it was cash."

"Gee! But won't she cut a swath with all that dough!"

"Do you think so?" asked the detective, smiling.

"She's sure to."

"I take it, then, from what you say, that she is fond of society, and of admiration. No?"

"You bet. And rich costumes. Receiving admiration, though, is her long suit."

"Isn't it rather strange that you never knew her last name, Radcliffe?"

"Oh, I don't know. There were many of the models whom we knew only by their given names. She was one of them."

"She is very beautiful, and very dark, eh? Should you say that her features are Semitic, Radcliffe?"

"Oh, no. She is not a Jewess."

"Italian, or Greek, possibly."

"No. Did you ever see a Tartar girl, Nick?"

"I don't think I ever did, knowingly. That is, the real thing."

"Well, I have. I traveled through southern Russia once, making sketches. Some of those people down there are as wild as partridges; and some of their women are very beautiful, too. I always had an idea that Janice was a Tartar."

"In more senses than one, possibly."

"Certainly that. But I am helping you when I have just said that I would not do it."

"Oh, I don't think you could call this rather general information you are giving me by that term."

"Did you say that a man was with her when the burglary was committed?"

"Yes."

"Probably the same chap who was at the opera with her, don't you think?"

"Very likely."

"Well, I won't assist you by giving you any more description of him than I have already supplied. I told you that he was tall and good looking. That is all I said, isn't it?"

"Yes; but I can supply the rest of it."

"You can? How so?"

"Well, I will say that he was tall, of athletic build, light complexion, blue eyes, smooth-shaven, well dressed, courtly in manner, and all that. Does it fit?"

"You amaze me. Did I say all that?"

"No; I had his description before I came here. He is the chap who took the photograph from which the painting on that canvas was made."

"Oh. It was a photograph in the first place, eh?"

"Yes;" and Nick related what we already know on that point.

"Those look like rather formidable safes, Nick. How did they get inside of them?"

The detective told him.

"What do you suppose they will do with all those diamonds?" was the next question that Radcliffe asked.

"I think that Madam Janice will find place and opportunity to wear a great many of them, judging from what you have told me about her," replied the detective. "The hundred and thirty thousand dollars in cash will keep her and her partner going for a while, so they need be in no haste to dispose of the stones. They can wait until the affair has blown over for doing that."

"So they can. I prophesy that you will have a hard time finding those burglars, Nick."

"Very likely."

"Do you know anything more about the man than you have told me?"

"No."

"Does the description you have of him tell you nothing?"

"No; only this: About eight months ago I had a case that developed into rather a strange affair. It began with a peculiar advertisement in a morning paper; and it ended by my encountering the son of an old criminal whom I once ran down. The son was a counterpart of his father, long since dead; and for some reason, every time I have thought of this burglar, my mind has involuntarily conjured up young Livingston Carruthers."*

"What? Carruthers? Liv—— By Jove!"

*See No. 607 of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY.

"What is the matter, Radcliffe?"

"Nothing. Not a thing in life."

"Oh, come, now. There is. What was the reason for your surprise?"

"Nothing at all."

"Oh, yes, there was, and I think I can tell you, since you will not tell me."

"You are so quick to draw conclusions, Nick."

"That is the teaching of my profession. Your surprise when I mentioned that name told me that it was somehow associated with your recollections of this woman, in Paris. And that, in its turn, informs me that my intuitions were correct when I have involuntarily associated young Carruthers with this affair—that is, with Janice. Two and two make four."

"Confound you!"

"Now, when I last saw this young Carruthers he wore a long, silken mustache, exactly like his father did before him; but evidently he has sacrificed it lately. Still, there was something about his description that suggested him to me, even though I did not realize that it did so."

"You say that you followed him up in one of your cases about eight months ago?" asked Radcliffe.

"Yes."

"Then I should suppose that he ought to be behind the bars by this time."

"So he ought; but he isn't, so far as I know. Through some miscarriage of justice, or by reason of the stupidity of a country grand jury, he was not indicted. I was away from home, and, before I knew about it, he had been released, and had left the country; at least, that was what I was told. And now I should not at all wonder if he is connected with this case, although I wouldn't have supposed burglary to be in his line."

CHAPTER VII.

IDENTIFYING THE BURGLARS.

That afternoon Nick took Abrams to police headquarters, and into the Rogues' Gallery, where he directed him to make a careful inspection of the pictures that were there; and while the diamond merchant was doing so, the detective took a newspaper from his pocket, and seated himself at a short distance away, where he covertly watched the diamond-dealer while he pretended to be reading the paper.

There was a picture of Carruthers in that gallery; one of the later additions to it.

It was a picture that Nick had had taken of the man after the close of that other case to which he had referred in his talk with Radcliffe. The detective had ordered it taken for his own benefit, and had presented a copy of it to the authorities at headquarters.

He did not pay much attention to Abrams till the merchant approached the swinging leaf of the album which contained that particular picture. Then he laid his paper aside and bent forward, waiting.

Suddenly he saw Abrams pause in his inspection and bend forward. He was gazing at the picture of Carruthers.

"Mr. Carter, will you step here a moment?" he asked, after a little.

Nick went to his side.

"What is it?" he asked, as if he had not noticed the hesitation of a moment ago.

"This is a new experience for me," said Abrams, "trying to identify the face of a man from among so many photographs of all sorts and conditions of men. It is a very difficult thing to do."

"Yes; unless one is accustomed to it."

"And I should dislike exceedingly to make a mistake."

"Naturally."

"But there is a photograph here on this page which suggests the man who purchased the diamond ring of me, and whom you say snapped his camera purposely to take a picture of the interior of my store."

"Yes? Which one is it?"

"Will you please understand that I do not indicate it to you as an identification?"

"Certainly."

"Well, it is that one there."

"Oh, yes. But this fellow wears a mustache, whereas the man who bought the ring was smooth-shaven; is that the idea?"

"Yes."

The detective took from the table near him a blank sheet of paper, and held it so that it covered part of the pictured face and concealed the mustache.

"Look now," he said.

"Yes, sir. I am very much inclined to think it is the same man; and yet I cannot be certain. But—wait a moment! Wait a moment!"

He bent forward nearer to the picture, and studied it intently for a time. Then he said:

"Mr. Carter, is there a magnifying-glass here anywhere?"

"Yes. A excellent one. Here it is."

He removed it from a drawer in the table, and

passed it to Abrams, who received it and at once held it at the correct focus for the best results.

After a close inspection made in this manner, which lasted only a moment, he suddenly straightened himself erect, and announced:

"Mr. Carter, there is now no sort of doubt about it at all. That is a picture of the same man. I would swear to it anywhere now."

"Indeed? How do you make the identification, Abrams?"

"By his scarf-pin."

"Eh?"

"By his scarf-pin. I noticed it that day. It was of very peculiar workmanship. I had never seen another one like it. I do not believe there is another just like it in the world. It was embedded in his tie that day he came to the store and purchased the ring, and it was in his tie when this picture here was taken. There can be no mistake."

"Every man to his trade," laughed the detective. "Instead of identifying the face, you recognize a bit of jewelry. Let me have the glass a moment."

He took it and bent nearer to the picture.

"Yes," he said, after a moment. "I, too, have noticed that pin."

"What? Have you, too, seen the man?"

"Yes; before you ever did. That is why I brought you here, Abrams. I had an idea that he might be the fellow, and I wished to see if you would pick him."

"Well, Mr. Carter, I was more sure about the face than I admitted, even before I recognized the pin; but now I would swear to both."

"Then that is all that is necessary."

"Yes, I think so."

"Come, then, we will go. I want you to make one more call with me."

"Where do we got this time?"

"To see an artist friend of mine. There I will show you a painted portrait of a woman, and I wish you to tell me if you have ever seen her in your store, or anywhere else, that is all."

"The woman of the burglary?"

"Yes; I think so."

"I declare, I don't see how you find out so much, and apparently with such ease. I begin to believe that I will get my property back again."

"I have thought all along that you would get back a considerable portion of it."

"Have you, indeed?"

"Yes; of the jewels; not of the cash."

"Oh, they are welcome to the cash if only I can get back the diamonds. I would give them the money if they would return the stones."

"I shouldn't permit that, Abrams."

When they arrived at Radcliffe's studio, to Nick's repeated raps there was no response, and the detective finally determined that his friend was not at home.

He hesitated a moment then. He particularly wished to have Abrams see the picture of La Janice, and he felt that he could ill afford the time of waiting till the return of Radcliffe. But, on the other hand, if he entered the studio without permission, and in the absence of his friend, would not the latter have a perfect right to resent the act?

Still, there was another side to the question, too.

Radcliffe had said that he would give the detective no more assistance; might he not, therefore, refuse to exhibit the picture he had made, to Abrams?

Suddenly the detective drew his picklock from his pocket and, without any more hesitation, unlocked the door and opened it; then he stood aside while Abrams entered, afterward following him, and closing the door behind securely.

The picture of Janice was still on the easel where Nick had placed it. Indeed, there were several signs about the studio which told the detective that Radcliffe had lost no time in leaving it after the departure of Nick Carter.

Radcliffe's pipe, which he had been smoking calmly when Nick left him, had been thrown carelessly upon the middle of the center-table, where ashes had fallen from it upon the velvet cover—and Nick happened to know that Radcliffe was very particular about his pipes, and still more choice of that particular table-cover.

Radcliffe's slippers had evidently been kicked off quickly, for one of them had landed upon the mantel, the other was beneath a chair at the opposite end of the room. His jacket that he had been wearing when Nick was there was in a corner on the floor.

Everything about the studio suggested that Radcliffe had departed from it in great haste after Nick had gone, and it suggested, further, that there could have been but one reason for doing that.

In a word, it became apparent instantly to Nick Carter that Radcliffe had deceived him about not knowing anything about the present location of La Janice, and that now he had gone to warn her of her danger.

The detective smiled enigmatically when he noticed

at this conclusion; then he gave his attention to the business in hand.

But he discovered, when he turned about, that Abrams was already staring at the picture.

"Who is that woman?" he asked. "Is that the picture you brought me here to see?"

"Yes."

"What did you want to ask me about it?"

"Merely if you knew the face?"

"Oh, yes; I know the face. That is, to say, I have seen it. It is a splendid likeness, too. It is perfect."

"She has visited your store frequently, then?"

"No; I don't think she was ever in my store at all."

"Indeed! Then where have you seen her?"

"In my own home, in Eighty-sixth Street."

"In your own *home?*"

"Yes."

"When? Under what circumstances?"

"She came there first to call upon a governess who is educating my children; she came several times after that, for the same purpose. I have seen her three or four separate times. She is very beautiful, Mr. Carter; don't you think so?"

"Yes; if one admires that style of beauty. Is she, do you think, related to the governess of your children?"

"I gathered as much."

"How long has the governess been with you?"

"Seven or eight months."

"What is her name?"

"Brown."

"What is her first name?"

"I don't think I know. She is always addressed as Miss Brown. Wait a moment, though. When this dark woman whose picture is here came to call upon her, she addressed her as Pauline."

"Pauline! Well, well, well; the plot is thickening, Mr. Abrams; that is, it has that appearance just now. Pauline, eh?"*

"I hope you don't mean to suggest that Miss Brown is connected in any way with the burglary of my store, sir."

"No; I do not. I don't think she is; but if she is the young person I think she is, she has been associated with these people in the past. In fact, she is related to the man in the case. But you must not think ill of her, Mr. Abrams. At least, not until I have seen her, to make sure. I will go there with you now, if you will take me. I must have a talk with your Miss Brown without delay. And I ought to tell you that she once did me a very great service which it will be hard to repay. She saved my life, in fact, and from that very man whose picture you saw at the Rogues' Gallery. Will you take me to your home?"

"Yes. At once."

"And afterward I will return here, to have a little talk with my friend who owns this studio."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BURGLAR'S HALF-SISTER.

As the two men were ascending the steps of the merchant's house, the detective asked his companion this question:

"Is anything known about the robbery, as yet, at your home?"

"No; I don't think so. The early afternoon papers have got it, of course, but no one at my house ever reads one of them, and I have not sent any word."

"Good. Then do me the favor not to say anything about it at first; not until I have talked with Miss Brown."

The merchant left the detective in his spacious library while he went in search of the governess, saying as he left him:

"I will send her to you here, and then I will go to my wife. I feel that she should be told of the loss I have sustained. There is no objection to that, is there?"

"Not at all."

Miss "Brown" came presently; but, as Nick had suspected, she was in reality Pauline Mason, although Mason was no more her name than Brown, the half-sister of Livingston Carruthers.

She paused in the doorway, and uttered an exclamation of surprise, for Nick had cautioned the merchant against mentioning his name, and she had not known who wished to see her; but she came quickly forward, with an expression of pleasure, mixed with alarm, on her face.

"You, Mr. Carter?" she cried. "I am really very glad, indeed, to see you, although you frighten me, too. How did you know——"

"Quite by accident, Pauline. I was not seeking you, I can assure you of that, although I did seek for you and try to find you after we parted the last time.

*Pauline, known as Pauline Mason, was Livingston Carruthers' half sister. She was a prominent character in the preceding story, No. 697, of this Weekly.—Ed.

You disappeared so utterly that I decided it was your wish to be let alone."

"It was, Mr. Carter."

"But you should not have gone away before you gave me an opportunity to thank you for what you did for me."

"I thought it for the best," she said, with her eyes cast down.

"It was really a magnificent thing that you did for me, Pauline," he told her.

"No. I should have done it long before I did; but I was afraid, deathly afraid."

"I know. Has Livingston bothered you since that time?"

"Not until very lately. He did not know where I was until—until a short time ago."

"How long ago, Pauline?"

"Five or six weeks ago, I think. His wife——"

"His wife? Has he a wife?"

"Yes. They were married in Paris, several years ago. Afterward they separated, and I had no idea that they were together again until she appeared here at this house, without warning, and asked to see me. I was amazed when I discovered who it was."

"Who is she, Pauline? That is, who *was* she before she married your broth——"

"Please don't refer to Livingston as my brother. She called herself Janice Maitland, an English name, although she is not English. I don't know what she is. In Paris she was something of an artist, and was known as La Janice, with the accent as I have pronounced it. She was also a model, I believe."

"Why did she come here to see you?"

"She told me that she saw me riding in the park with the children, and that she followed me here, to find out where I lived. Afterward she came again, with a message from Livingston, who demanded that I should go to see him."

"Did you go?"

"No. I refused."

"And she came again?"

"Three more times."

"So she was here four times altogether, eh?"

"Yes."

"And you steadily refused to see your—to see Livingston?"

"Yes."

"Did he come here to see you?"

"No. He was keeping 'under cover,' as she said."

"I can imagine that. He did not wish to encounter me on the street. Do you know where they were living?"

"No; she never told me that."

"Do you know anything more about them than you have told me now?"

"No; nothing. I have remained as closely in the house as possible since Janice came here. I have not stirred out, save in the carriage with the children, or in the automobile."

"Tell me, Pauline, when Janice called upon you did she not ask you a good many questions about the owner of this house? About Mr. Abrams?"

"Why, yes; she did. But why—— Mr. Carter, are those people contemplating a criminal act that is to be directed against my employer?"

"I am afraid, Pauline, that it has already been accomplished. His store has been robbed."

"By them?"

"I think so."

"It is terrible! Terrible! Tell me what I can do to aid you in capturing them, and you will find me more than willing to assist you."

"I felt assured of that already. It is my opinion that the expressed wish of Livingston to have you go to see him was only a pretense, and that, in reality, those calls made by Janice were merely to find out all she could about Mr. Abrams' habits. For instance, didn't she ask you if he ever went to his store evenings?"

"Yes."

"And what else?"

"I remember now that she did ask me a great many questions about his habits, but I did not think about it at the time. She asked quite as many questions about other members of the family."

"Of course; to blind you to her real purpose."

"She asked me once, I remember, if he went to the store Sundays."

"Exactly. So you see, Pauline, neither she nor Livingston really wished to see you; they were only engaged in gathering information. I don't think they intend to bother you any more at all."

"Oh, I hope not."

"You like your place here, do you? You like Mr. Abrams?"

"Yes; I like all of them. They are very fond of me. I do hope that this affair will not drive me away, Mr. Carter."

"No; I think I can assure you that it will not. For I have already told Mr. Abrams so much about you

that I think it best now to tell him all. You should do the same, too."

"I will! I will!"

"Now tell me, did Janice let fall in your presence anything at all regarding their future plans? Did she ever inadvertently mention any place where they had thought of going?"

"No; I think not."

"Another question. You have told me that Livingston and Janice were married a long time ago and afterward separated. Was she ever known by his name?"

"No."

"By what name, then?"

"The one I gave you—La Janice."

"Not as Miss or Mademoiselle Maitland?"

"To a very few—yes."

"When was the last time that she came here to this house to see you?"

"Last Saturday."

"What? So recently as that?"

"Yes."

"Tell me about that call, please."

"It was no different from the others that I remember. I refused to see her at first, but she insisted, and at last I came down-stairs to her; but I told her that it was the very last time I would do so, and that, if she came again, she would not be admitted. And, to make her doubly sure of that, I told the footman at the door, in her presence, as she was leaving, that he was not to admit her again, and that I was never to be at home to any person who called at the door for me. You see, I have no friends in the city, so I could give a general order like that."

"I should have called upon you had I known that you were here."

"And I should have been sorry not to have seen you. However, we need not worry about that now."

"No. Now tell me more about that last call of hers. What was the burden of her conversation that day?"

"She seemed to be particularly interested concerning what I intended to do yesterday—Sunday."

"And what the plans of the other members of the household were, also, eh?"

"Why, yes, I suppose it amounted to that. But I believed that she and Livingston wanted to find out if I intended to go anywhere alone, and that they meant to kidnap me, or something like that."

"She doubtless managed to convey that impression."

"Perhaps she did."

"While in reality she wished to find out definitely what Mr. Abrams intended to do over Sunday."

"Well, if that was her intention, she got her wish."

"How was that, Pauline?"

"I remember telling her that I did intend to go out, on Sunday, but that I was going with the children and my employer, to Interlaken, New Jersey, to spend the day, and that we should not be home till late at night."

"I suppose she took her departure soon after that, didn't she?"

"Almost at once; yes."

"You see, that was all she wished to know. I think they had some idea of working in the back part of Mr. Abrams' store all that day, but they wished to be perfectly sure that there would be no danger of interruption."

"And I was little better than a fool to fall into her trap."

"No; not that. You were concerned for your own safety, and it did not occur to you that your employer's store could be threatened."

"When was it robbed, Mr. Carter?"

"Last night. Since hearing what you have told me, I am sure about that."

"Was much taken?"

"Yes. But I am satisfied that we shall recover a great part of it. Now, I hear Mr. Abrams approaching. I will explain this matter fully to him in your presence, and then I will go. But I shall come again to see you, when business does not call me here. And I want you to promise me that if you make any change in your plans you will inform me at once about it. Will you do that?"

"Yes. Since you wish it so."

"I do wish it, Pauline."

CHAPTER IX.

A QUARREL BETWEEN FRIENDS.

It was less than an hour after the interview with Pauline when Nick Carter presented himself again at the door of Radcliffe's studio.

This time his summons upon it was answered by Radcliffe's lusty voice calling out:

"*Entrez, mon ami!* Come in, confound you! Hello, Nick; is it you?"

"Very much I; yes."

"Back again for another look at the picture?"

"Yes; and at you, also."

"Well, look away. I'm willing."

"You seem to be unduly cheerful, Radcliffe. Have you been out among your friends since I was here, or has some cheerful liar been calling upon you?"

"Neither. I have been asleep most of the time, and there hasn't been a soul here to see me."

"Really! You astonish me. Do you mean to tell me that you have been wearing that sagged smoking-jacket and those disreputable slippers ever since I was here?"

"Sure thing. Haven't had them off me," he lied placidly. "I like 'em, you see. They have the advantage of being comfortable, and one isn't afraid of getting paint on them."

"No. Of course not. By the way, Radcliffe, how did you find Miss Maitland?"

The question was asked easily, while Nick stood directly in front of the artist, with his feet wide apart, his hands in his trousers pockets, and with an indulgent smile on his face.

As for Radcliffe, his jaw dropped, and he stared, while his right hand, which had been conveying the pipe to his mouth, stopped half-way, as if paralyzed.

But this tableau only lasted a moment. Then the artist burst into a hearty laugh, and he cried out:

"How is Miss Maitland, did you say? Blowed if I know. Who is she? Friend of yours?"

"I refer to Miss Janice Maitland, alias Mrs. Livingston Carruthers, alias La Janice. How did you find her?"

"What the devil are you driving at, Carter?"

"Information, Radcliffe. You lied to me a moment ago, and you are lying to me now."

Radcliffe leaped to his feet angrily.

"By Heaven, Nick Carter!" he shouted, "I don't allow anybody to talk to me like that! We have been friends a good many years, but almost directly behind you you will discover the door that opens upon the hall. You will oblige me by passing through it as soon as you can possibly do it."

Nick did not move. He continued calmly:

"I returned here while you were away. You were not here. Therefore, you lied to me just now. And I shall not go out through that doorway until I have quite finished what I came here to say."

"Then I will go out myself and leave you in possession, that's all."

"You won't do anything of the kind, for I shall not permit it, Radcliffe."

Radcliffe settled back into his chair, scowling.

"I don't know whether or not you knew where Janice could be found, when I was here with you before," said Nick, "but I did know that you thought you could find her, and that you succeeded. I do know that you went to see her, and that you saw her. I know that to be the reason for your high spirits when I entered a moment ago."

"Well, if you know so confounded much, what the devil are you bothering me about it for?"

"Because——"

"Hold on a minute, Carter. Before you say anything more, I have got something to say. It never occurred to me that *you* would spy upon *me*. If it had, I would have taken a different course. But now, since you want the truth, I'll tell it to you. I did go out while you were away, and it's none of your infernal business where I went, what I did, or whom I saw. And now, get out. You pollute the room—really."

Nick turned without another word, and walked deliberately toward the door. Then he passed out upon the hall, and was striding slowly toward the elevator, when he heard, or thought he heard, Radcliffe ringing at the telephone.

With the sound an idea came to him like a flash.

He knew the central exchange with which Radcliffe's telephone was connected, and he lost no time in hurrying around there, where, as soon as he arrived, he asked if he might see the manager privately for a moment.

To the manager, who was a very charming young woman, he explained:

"I am Nicholas Carter, the detective. I think you have possibly heard of me?"

"Yes, sir."

"I was just now at the studio of a friend of mine who is an artist. I asked him for a bit of information which could not possibly affect him in any manner, had he given it to me; but he refused. The information I desired was the address of certain persons, which he has, and which I have not. Now, as I came away, I heard him at his telephone, and I am under the impression that he called up one of those persons whose address I desire, and told them that I am seeking them. I have called around here to ask you if you will be kind enough to give me a record of the last several calls that have come through this exchange from Mr. Radcliffe's number. Here it is, on this bit of paper."

"Isn't that request somewhat irregular, Mr. Carter?" asked the manager.

"Possibly. But it is also of great importance. If you will call up your general manager, at the same

office, who is a friend of mine; I am sure that he will direct you to give me the information; only that will take time, and delay is what I wish to avoid."

She was silent, and Nick added:

"I will assure you again that I am doing no injustice to Mr. Radcliffe, and I can also assure you that the persons I wish to find are not subscribers. They are merely at some hotel or apartment house, and I wish to find out what one."

"I think I will risk giving you the information you wish, Mr. Carter."

"Thank you."

"How many calls shall I look for?"

"Only those that have come in over his phone within the last half-hour."

"That would be since three-thirty?"

"Yes."

She was gone only a moment, when she returned with a slip of paper in her hand, and gave it to him smilingly.

"You see there has been only one," she said, "and that is the Hotel Mammoth."

"Thank you," replied the detective. "I am very greatly obliged to you;" and he went out.

But, instead of turning toward the hotel in question, he made his way rapidly homeward, where for some time he was busy in his dressing-room.

And when he came forth at last he did not in the least resemble the Nick Carter who had entered it, save only in a general way. He was dressed in the height of fashion. His hair had suddenly turned black. He had grown a black mustache and imperial, and he carried a traveling-bag and a cane.

Half an hour later he registered at the Mammoth, secured a room, gave his bag to a boy to be carried to it, and then began strolling through the corridors.

He was on the lookout for two persons—Janice and Radcliffe.

He did not expect that he would find Carruthers there, for he had figured that the last-named individual would have gone elsewhere for a time, or, at least, if he were at that hotel, he would either keep his room, or be so thoroughly disguised that even the detective would not know him.

But in the case of the woman, he argued that it was a different thing altogether.

She could not possibly be aware, save from what Radcliffe had told her, that her face was known; and if Radcliffe had told her any of the things he had learned from the detective, she would by this time be making every preparation to leave the hotel at once; if the detective was mistaken in his suspicions of Radcliffe—and he did not know that he was not—Janice would be sure to show herself along the corridors, if she happened to be a guest there.

But although Nick searched diligently, he found no trace of her at all.

After a while he went to the dining-room and had a good dinner, of which he stood greatly in need, and after that, at about the time he figured that Radcliffe ought to show up there if he had made an appointment over the telephone, he took his station near the desk and waited and watched.

It was almost nine in the evening when Radcliffe entered the hotel.

Nick saw him when he came through the door, and saw, also, that he did not approach the desk at all, but walked directly to one of the elevators and passed inside.

Nick followed him, for he was satisfied that Radcliffe would not recognize him; nor did he.

At the fifteenth floor Radcliffe got out and hurried along the corridor toward the west end of it, Nick Carter strolling along after him, jingling his key, and seemingly in search of his own quarters.

And so he saw that Radcliffe presently rapped at a door which was opened for him instantly, and he passed inside and was lost to view.

Then Nick turned away, and sought the ground floor again; and, once there, he searched for and found the house detective, who was personally known to him.

"Bray," he said to him, "I wish you would go behind the desk and find out for me the name of the occupants of fifteen hundred and sixty-seven. I would like to know, also, when they arrived, and any other information that is lying around about them."

"All right, Mr. Carter. What's up?"

"I don't know yet. Perhaps nothing. I haven't even seen the parties yet, and do not know that I am interested in them at all."

The house detective went away, but he returned ten minutes later.

"Count and Countess Sachelli," he announced laconically.

"When did they arrive?" asked Nick.

"Two weeks ago last Saturday."

"Sure about that?"

"Yes."

"What else about them do you know? If they have been here that long, you ought to know them by sight."

"I do."

"Well, what sort of 'lookers' are they?"

"They look a good deal like what they are—Italians."

"Both dark?"

"Yes; and say, the woman is a beauty."

"Have you seen either of them about the corridors this evening?"

"No. I guess they have gone to the theater."

"On the contrary, I know that at least one of them must be in their rooms. I wish I could get a good look at the woman, Bray."

"Well, perhaps there will be a chance. You hang around for a while, and I'll see what can be done to accommodate you. That is, if it is important."

"It is so important that I will do almost anything to get a look at that woman's face; and I don't believe she will show herself in the corridors again to-night, either. Or to-morrow, for that matter. I shouldn't wonder if they are arranging to leave right now."

"Think so?"

"Yes."

"Then we'll manage to have a look at them."

CHAPTER X.

THE WOMAN OF THE PICTURE.

It was not very long after that before the house detective approached Nick again, and, touching him on the shoulder to attract his attention, gave a significant nod and moved away.

The detective followed his conductor down to the engine-room, and the house detective, pointing to a pair of greasy overalls and a jumper, announced:

"If the thing is important enough to make you get into those togs and smear a little oil and whatever else comes handy on your face, I have fixed up a method of taking you into that room on the fifteenth. What do you say?"

"I'll be ready in two minutes," was the reply.

And it was not much longer than that before he was following Bray along the hall on the fifteenth floor, where the house detective tapped upon the door of No. 1567.

It was opened part way after a moment of waiting, and the face of a maid appeared.

Bray pushed himself forward at once, and was halfway inside the door before the maid could prevent it; a thing that she would have done, too, Nick thought, from her manner, if she had been given the opportunity.

"Please tell the count and countess," Bray remarked nonchalantly, "that I will have to take this man into the bath-room for a few moments. There is something wrong with the pipes in the rooms under this one, and we want to see if it comes from here."

"There is nothing wrong here," replied the maid, "and the count and countess——"

"There, there, my good girl. I shall not disturb the count or the countess. Come along, Dobbs."

It was then that a door opening upon another room of the suite was thrown open, and another person appeared; and Nick Carter, having himself well in hand, made no sign whatever at the joy he felt over the discovery he had just made.

For there was no denying the fact that the woman in the doorway was Janice.

The lineaments of her face were too indelibly stamped upon the memory of the detective, because of the painting he had seen and studied, for him to be mistaken about that.

Beyond her, through the doorway, he could see Radcliffe, where he was seated in an easy chair, smoking, and otherwise appearing as if he were enjoying himself.

Nick's first impulse was to step quickly forward then and there, and place the woman under arrest; but then he remembered suddenly that he could see but *one* man in the other room, and that there was no sound of talking in there to tell him that others were present.

It might be, after all, that Carruthers was not there.

The detective did not wish to be too precipitate, and so spoil the whole thing.

He wanted to get both the burglars; the man and the woman.

Moreover, he wanted to recover the gems that had been stolen, and if one of the thieves happened not to be present, it would be more than likely that the absent one would have the jewels.

If he were rash, the recovery of the stolen property might be delayed, and, after all, that was quite as important as the arrest of the criminals.

In the meantime, Janice was speaking, although he barely sensed what she was saying; but it was not necessary that he should do so, since all the talking devolved upon Bray.

"What is the meaning of this?" she exclaimed. "Why do you force yourself into our rooms, sir?"

"I must pardon me, madam," replied Bray, with chesterfieldian politeness, "but it really is necessary

that this man should look at the pipes in the bathroom, in order to protect the room beneath. We won't be but a moment."

"There is nothing the matter——"

"Yes, madam. I know. But, unfortunately, you do not understand the conditions under you. Now, Dobbs, get to work and be quick about it."

So Nick entered the bathroom, where he pounded and otherwise made such noises as were supposed to proceed from such an examination; and then he came forth again, to find the conditions just as he had left them.

Janice still stood framed in the doorway between the rooms, and beyond it he could see Radcliffe; but nothing else.

"All through, Dobbs?" asked Bray.

"Yes, sir."

And so they went out again, and through the corridor toward the baggage-elevator, by which they had ascended to that floor.

"I'd give a small farm to hear what they are talking about in that room right now," said Nick, after they had turned the corner of the corridor, and were out of sight from that room if any one should open a door.

"Were they the people you are looking for?" asked Bray.

"The woman is; but I don't know whether the man is there or not. I could see only one man in the adjoining room, and——"

"And that was Radcliffe, the artist. I know him. He is quite a blood, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"He has been here once before to-day to see those people, Carter. It was about the middle of the afternoon, but they were out. He left a note addressed to the woman, too."

Nick nodded, and repeated, half to himself, the remark he had made once before.

"I'd give a small farm to overhear what they are saying in that room."

"Well, I don't see any way of accomplishing that, Nick, unless—— *Say!* How much of your nerve have you got with you to-night?"

"All of it, Bray. Why?"

"That suite contains seven rooms."

"Oh, does it? That is interesting intelligence. What of it?"

"Don't be sarcastic, Nick. We entered by the middle room of the lot. There are two rooms located beyond, that one in which the countess and her friend were seated when we arrived, and there are three off in the other direction."

"Well, what are you getting at, Bray?"

"I have got a bunch of pass-keys in one of my pockets. I'll let you have them, and wait here for you if you want to try it. Do you?"

"By Jove, Bray, I wonder if it could be worked?"

"I don't know why not."

"Aren't those doors to the two rooms beyond where the countess is entertaining Radcliffe locked on the inside?"

"They may be; and again they may not be. You can only tell by trying. Here are the keys. Do you want them?"

"Yes."

"Better slip out of those overalls."

"I'm going to, right here."

"I don't know whether those doors creak or not. I don't know whether they are locked inside or not. I don't know but that both those rooms may be occupied, either."

"Shall you wait for me, or will you go down below?"

"Oh, I'll stay here in the corridor till you come out again; and say, Nick, if you are caught in there, I'll pinch you for a sneak-thief. That will pull the wool over their eyes regarding your real intentions."

"Yes."

"Suppose you discover the two of them there, and find out that the man is the fellow you want, also, what will be your next move?"

"I will come back out to you, and we will make the arrests together. That will be the best way."

"All right. What are you after them for, anyhow?"

"Burglary."

"Eh? Is that so?"

"Yes. Did you read the evening papers, Bray?"

"Yes. *Say!* You don't mean that it is the Abrams' job, do you?"

"Yes."

"Hully gee! Who'd have thought that? Why, it was half a million job—that!"

"I know it. I was the first one on the scene, after Abrams himself."

"And you have traced it to the Count and Countess Sachelli?"

"I think so."

"When was it done, Nick? The paper said last night, or the night before, but that it was impossible to tell which."

"It was done last night."

"I didn't see any evidence around to indicate that they are thinking of leaving, did you?"

"No."

"Then they're not a count and countess at all, eh?"

"The woman has been an artist's model in Paris, and is something of an artist herself. The man I am after is her husband, all right; he is also the son of one of the shrewdest criminals that was ever in New York."

"Who?"

"Livingston Carruthers."

"What, the diamond-smuggler?"

"Yes."

"I remember that case, Nick."

They had been talking rapidly while they returned along the corridor, and now they stood directly before one of the doors that Nick Carter had determined to try for an entrance into those rooms beyond it.

"I'll stand here near you till you get inside," said Bray. "If anybody appears out of one of the other doors, or along the corridor, while you are working with the pass-keys, we will seem to be talking together. Now go ahead. No, wait a minute."

"What is the matter?"

"Suppose they should come out while you are inside, and I should think them trying to make a getaway?"

"Nab them."

"What, the whole lot?"

"Yes."

"Radcliffe isn't in it, is he?"

"No; but take him also, just the same. He needs a good lesson, and a little rough handling would do him no harm."

"Well, go ahead with your keys."

But although the key turned readily enough in the lock, the door refused to yield.

As Nick had feared would be the case, the door was fastened securely on the inside.

"Try the other one," said Bray; and they passed along toward it.

Here the attempt was much more successful. The key not only turned in the lock, but the door itself yielded to the pressure that Nick put upon it, and, after listening a moment, to be assured that he would not step in upon some person who might be there, he pushed it wider ajar, and passed through.

There was no light whatever in this room, and for a moment the detective stood quite silent and still, listening; but then perceiving that the door to the adjoining room was partly ajar, he made his way in that direction.

CHAPTER XI.

A WOMAN AT BAY.

"You must realize, of course, Janice, that I cannot consent to uphold you in a crime. That is out of the question. I have done much more already than I should have done. I have stood between you and the law, and I did it only because—— Well, what is the use of repeating it? You know why as well as I do."

"Because you once loved me, and believe that you have gotten over it," laughed the woman. "But you haven't gotten over it, my friend."

Those were the two remarks that Nick Carter heard uttered when he entered the room next to where Radcliffe and the "countess" were talking together.

He crept softly across it, for that room was also unlighted, and finally obtaining a position close to the door leading into that other room, he waited, to watch and hear.

For he could see quite plainly through an opening between the door and the casing, and, of course, he could hear every word that was uttered.

The two were seated so that their profiles were toward where he was hidden.

Radcliffe spoke again.

"It seems to me as though we had gone over and over this affair to a sufficiency," he said. "I do not want to betray you, and yet——"

"You have already betrayed me, as I have told you several times. You did it when you recognized my handiwork in the painting of that canvas. You did it again when you exhibited my portrait to the detective—and that was the worst betrayal of all. It ruined the whole thing."

"But I didn't know that he was looking for you. I did not know that you had committed a burglary, and——"

"Oh, enough. You are such a fool about some things, Radcliffe."

"I suppose so. I can't help it."

"And now you want me to give up all that I have toiled so hard to get, and when it is all so safely stored away, too. I won't do it, that's all."

"But think, Janice; think! If you will surrender the stolen things—the money and the jewels—if you

will give them all up to me, I will take them to Nick Carter in person, and give them into his hands. I'll agree to get him to consent to let you escape to Europe, and not to follow you when you get there. I'll——"

"What you suggest is utterly foolish. In the first place, I have already spent considerable of the money."

"How much?"

"More than a thousand dollars of it."

"Well, if you will do as I ask, I will make up the deficiency for you."

"But don't you see that that would leave me flat broke?" She used slang as naturally as if it were the choicest of language.

"I'll stake you to another thousand to take you to Paris."

"And what would I do when I got there, pray?"

"Anything. There is a lot that you could do, Janice."

"And what about Livingston?"

"Oh, confound Livingston! But you can take him with you if you like."

"Suppose that I don't like?"

"Then leave him in the lurch. Let him take care of himself. He always was a cold-blooded proposition, anyhow. You know I never liked him. I did not know until Carter told me this afternoon that you had married him. I'm afraid if I had known it——"

"What?"

"Nothing."

"Don't you suppose I'm tired of my bargain, Bert? I hate him—but I am afraid of him. So now you have it. I am actually afraid of him; I, who was never afraid of anybody before in my life."

"It's a wonder you don't rid yourself of him, then; you are capable of it. You once offered to run a dagger into me, I remember."

"I did leave him once," she replied, paying no attention whatever to the latter part of his remark.

"You were a fool to go back to him, then."

"I wouldn't, if I had known that—that——"

"That what?"

"That you still cared for me."

"But I don't, Janice. On my word, that is all over; was all over long ago. I'm trying to save you now just for old times' sakes. On my word."

"But—Radcliffe—Bert—if—if I should tell you that I—that I have never for one moment forgotten you? That I——"

"Oh, show all that, Janice. I don't believe you, you know. I am ten years older than I was then, and ten years wiser. I'm doing this for the sake of old times. If you will give up the plunder, I'll supply what is wanting in the cash, and I'll stake you to a thousand to take you back to Paris. What do you say?"

"I won't do it."

"Well, then, I will have to do my duty, that's all."

"And what do you consider to be your duty, Radcliffe?"

"Why, I'll have to go to Nick Carter, beg his pardon, and give the whole snap away."

"Do you mean that you would do that—really?"

"Confound it, Janice, I don't want to do it, but there isn't any other way."

"Bert Radcliffe, I'll ask you just once more to leave things as they are."

"I wish I could do so, Janice; but I cannot."

"I don't know why not."

"Just because I can't. Where is the plunder, anyhow? Where are the jewels and the money?"

"They are where you will never see them. You can bet on that."

"I suppose that Livingston has got them with him. Where is he, anyhow?"

"I told you when you arrived that he was out."

"And I told you over the telephone to have him here when I called this evening."

"He wouldn't stay to meet you."

"Afraid, wasn't he?"

"Did you ever know him to be afraid of anything yet?"

"No; to do him justice, I can't say that I ever did."

"Bert, I'll give you one more chance. If you——"

"Give *me* one more chance? What do you mean by that statement?"

"You did not let me finish what I was saying."

"Well, go on."

"If you leave me now, within the next five minutes, and promise me that you will not say a word to anybody about what you know for another twenty-four hours—promise me on your word of honor—you can go."

"Eh? I can go?"

"That is exactly what I said, Radcliffe."

"Come, that's a good one. I can go! Well, I like that."

"What do you say, Radcliffe?" She spoke with icy coldness now.

"What do I say? I say this: What in the deuce do you mean, Janice?"

"I mean this: That unless you make me the promise I have asked for, I am afraid to let you go, fearing

that you will betray me; and, therefore, I mean that, unless you make the promise, *you cannot go.*"

"Cannot—go?" he asked, rather dazed by her manner, as well as her words.

"No. You are too dangerous to be set at liberty just now. If you won't promise to keep still, you must be quieted so that you cannot talk."

"Is this a threat, Janice?"

"It sounds rather like it, doesn't it?"

"What would you do?"

"Do? What would I *not* do, rather than be caught now, rather than lose all that I have worked so hard to get? Do you know how long it took us to get into those safes, even after we had accomplished all the first part of the plan?"

"No."

"Ten nights of steady work on those safes; ten nights—about eighty hours. And do you for a minute suppose that, after doing all that, I will relinquish what I have gained by it, merely at your say so? Oh, no, Bertie boy. I would cut your heart out first, to prevent you from talking."

"I begin to believe you would," he gasped.

"Oh, you needn't stare so, I would do it; or worse. What is your life to me, or half a dozen lives, for that matter, if they stand between me and my ambition? Nothing. Will you make me the promise I require?"

"No; I'm blowed if I will. On the contrary, I'll go straight to the house detective the moment I get downstairs——"

"You'll never get there, Bertie."

"What? What's that?"

"You'll never get there. You are a fly in the spider's web, and I am the spider. I'm going to kill you, and—figuratively—eat you."

Nick could see Radcliffe shrug his shoulders with apparent unconcern, although it was plain that he was disturbed by the threat.

"I guess there won't be any killing to-night," Radcliffe said, trying to laugh.

"Look," she replied to him; and then Nick saw that, apparently without a movement of her arm, she had somehow provided herself with a revolver, which was now pointed directly at his heart; and he could see Radcliffe stiffen and stare with fascinated eyes upon the weapon.

It was evident that he knew something about the woman with whom he was dealing, and that he thought her quite capable of carrying out her threats.

"Put that gun away," Radcliffe demanded, but there was no spirit behind the demand.

"Oh, no, I won't. I am going to shoot you with it, unless you make the promise."

"But if I made such a promise, under duress, I would not be bound to keep it."

"Oh, yes, you would. I know you well enough to feel sure that if you give your word you will keep it. You are just fool enough for that. Will you promise, or shall I shoot?"

"You dare not shoot. The report of the pistol would be heard. People would rush in here, and——"

"And find the revolver clasped in your hand; find a suicide, if they found anything. But the shot would not be heard. These walls are thick. We are on the top floor. We are in the middle room of this suite, almost. Will you promise?"

Trevor did not reply. He was frightened now.

Then Janice straightened and stiffened her arm, so that the muzzle of the weapon was much closer to Radcliffe; and she spoke coldly to him again, while her black eyes looked mercilessly upon him, and a cruel smile played about the corners of her mouth.

"Will you promise, or shall I shoot you?" she asked.

Still he was silent, and she waited a long time.

"For the last time I ask you, will you promise what I ask?" she demanded.

CHAPTER XII.

A STRANGE SCENE.

At that instant, when it seemed to Nick Carter that things had reached a climax, indeed, there was an interruption from a most unexpected quarter. Nick would have interfered long before this had he thought there was any real danger that she would shoot; he had regarded much of what was happening as a bluff, and so he waited.

The interruption came through the opening of the door that was directly opposite the place where Nick Carter was concealed; it was the same door in which Janice had stood talking to Bray when they had entered the suite with the suborning about the [illegible] pipes.

It was thrown open suddenly, and a man stood framed therein.

As Nick gazed upon him, a smile slowly formed upon his lips, and he formed the words to himself, but without making a sound:

"It is Carruthers; but I never would have known him had I met him on the street."

It was Carruthers, with a deftly made false mustache fastened to his upper lip—a mustache that was as black as tar, and long and silken.

And his hair and his eyebrows had been dyed to the same hue; even his lashes were colored to match them.

But when he spoke, the disguise was at once apparent, for he did not attempt to alter his voice.

"Radcliffe," he said blandly, "you are in a bad predicament: don't you think so?"

"Eh? Is it you, Liv?" gasped Radcliffe, who was now quite pale. "Gad, I wouldn't have known you."

"No; and you are not likely to be able to recognize anybody presently, unless you make that promise Janice asks."

"Do you mean to tell me that you two will kill me unless I swear as you want me to?"

"Just that, Radcliffe. Things have gone too far to draw back now. It is up to you."

"How long have you been listening at that door?"

"I have not been out of the rooms to-night. It was thought best that Janice should see you alone, so I went into one of the other rooms. I have been in this one most of the time, only when they came here about the water-pipes. By the way, Jan, I wonder if that was a bluff, and if they only wanted to get a look at us."

"Oh, no; I guess not."

"I thought, for a moment while they were here, that the chap in the overalls was Carter."

"Oh, no. He doesn't know where we are. He had no means of finding out, and it would never occur to him to look for us in this hotel."

"Perhaps not. Now, Radcliffe."

"Well, Livingston?"

"I don't want to hurt you unless I have to do it; but our time is getting short. We have got to get out of here, since you made that fool play of yours and let Nick Carter see a picture of Janice. I really ought to kill you for that alone."

"But I didn't——"

"You have said that before, and you have said it often enough so that I quite understand it. But it doesn't alter the fact that you did it, and that you are an ass. Janice says she is willing to take your word, if you give it, and, if she is, I am. As I said a moment before, it is up to you."

"But suppose I refuse, then what?"

"I shall kill you, here and now. I shall do it anyway, in just one minute by my watch, unless before that time you have gotten down on your knees before Janice, and have begun to frame your promise into words."

To emphasize his words, he pulled a revolver from his pocket with one hand, and his watch appeared in the other one.

"A second hand makes the circuit in a very little time," he said significantly. "One quarter," he called out. Then there was an interval of silence.

"Two quarters—one-half minute. . . . Three quarters."

Another shorter interval of silence, and then Radcliffe threw himself forward on his knees and began to mumble his promises.

The scene of it made Nick Carter sick at heart.

He drew back away from the door, rose to his feet, passed into the other room through which he had come, opened the door into the hall, and peered out.

Bray was half-way down the corridor, so that Nick had to step entirely out of the room and pull the door shut after him before he could attract his attention; but then the house detective came toward him rapidly, and, after a hurried whispered consultation, they both reentered the rooms together.

They tiptoed across the first room and into the second; and then, through the door where Nick had heard and seen so much, they saw Radcliffe still upon his knees, while Janice was looking down upon him with unspeakable scorn in her fierce eyes.

Suddenly she turned toward Carruthers.

"To think that I ever thought myself in love with *that!*" she exclaimed.

"Do you think he will keep his promise, Janice?" asked her husband.

"Oh, yes. I think so. He was always a stickler for that sort of thing."

"I'm rather afraid to trust him, though."

"So am I. But we don't want a murder on our hands if we can avoid it. I'm not thinking of him. I am thinking of ourselves."

"Oh, as for that, I'd about as soon be caught for cutting that fellow, or shooting him, as for the other. I believe I'll just plug him, anyhow."

He raised the revolver part way, then lowered it again.

"I hate to shoot down a defenseless creature such as you are, in cold blood," he said. "If you had any grit at all, I wouldn't so much mind. I wonder if you will keep that promise of yours. Eh?"

"Oh, I'll keep it, all right!"

"What do you say, Janice?"

"Oh, let's take a chance on him. The thing for us to do is to get out of here now as soon as we can do it."

"Suppose we tie him up and leave him here? He won't be discovered before morning."

"All right. That isn't a bad idea. Only I think a drug would be better than ropes."

"So do I."

"Well, Liv, be quick about it. You know that we must get to our cache where the stuff is, and get away before anybody gets on our track. And that Nick Carter is searching for us even now, I suppose."

"Oh, he won't find us. Here, you!" to Radcliffe. "Swallow that!" He held out a black pellet toward his victim.

"What is it?" gasped Radcliffe, taking an involuntary step backward, and thus placing himself almost within reach of the doorway beyond which Nick Carter and Bray were waiting and listening.

"It is something that will make you sleep, that's all."

"It is poison. It will kill me."

"Do it look, you fool. It won't harm you at all. Do you think I would bother about putting you to sleep if I really wished to kill you? Take it, I say, or I will cram it down your throat for you."

Carruthers had laid aside his revolver on the table, and Janice had put her own down also; and now, as Radcliffe reached forth a tremulous hand to take the pellet that was offered him, a hand and arm shot suddenly forth out of the darkness of the adjoining room and seized him.

At the same instant he was jerked violently backward through the doorway, and there loomed in his place, confronting Carruthers and Janice, no less a person than Nick Carter, who had torn away the false mustache and goatee, in order that they might know him.

And behind him, in the doorway, stood the taller form of Bray, the house detective.

The detective did not show any weapons, but Bray held two, one in either hand, leveled at the man and the woman before them.

"Don't try to recover your weapons, please," said Nick coldly. "If you do, I will not answer for Mr. Bray. We have been witnesses to this interesting scene, and it occurred to us that it was about time to put an end to it. The game has run out, Carruthers. You and your wife, Janice, are prisoners."

If ever there was a storm depicted in the countenance of a woman, one showed in the face of Janice Maitland Carruthers at that moment.

Her eyes fairly blazed their hatred, chagrin, cruel disappointment, dread.

For a moment no one spoke after Nick Carter's announcement; and then she made a remark that was characteristic of the woman; and she made it in a dazed manner that was almost pathetic.

"To think of the time we spent in getting into those safes, only to be caught and placed under arrest less than twenty-four hours after we finished the job."

"Well, you are my prisoners now, anyhow," said the detective; and Carruthers laughed aloud as he replied:

"Yes; I rather think we are, Carter. I rather think we are."

THE END.

The next number (1009) will contain "The Pullman Tragedy; or, Nick Carter in Extreme Peril."

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A DYING MAN'S SHOT.

By ROGER STARBUCK.

A light breeze from the south wrinkled the sea, gently wafting the brig *Centurion* upon her course. She was standing along about forty miles to the northeast of the beautiful Isle of Otachete, in the Pacific Ocean.

A man in the foretop, coiling a rope, chanced to glance ahead, where, about a mile distant, he beheld a canoe containing one occupant. The latter, by the dress, he concluded was a female. She stood upright, waving a white cloth, as if to signal the brig.

The man gave notice, and using his glass, the captain discovered that the woman was an islander.

Wondering why she signaled him, he lowered a boat, and was soon alongside of the canoe. Its occupant was a beautiful creature. Her eyes were large and dark, her black hair hung below her waist, her naked feet were no larger than sweet shells. Her garb was a loose robe of purple cloth, trimmed with red; she wore a wreath of her native flowers, and a string of beautiful beads around her neck.

Her voice was charmingly musical; it sounded like the silver tinkle of water in some coral cave.

"Well, my beauty," said the captain, smiling, "what do you want of me?"

"Want to go aboard," she answered, directing a terrified glance behind her. "Malay attack me on island, and he couldn't want to carry poor Sibylia away!"

"The deuce! Sibylia—is that your name?"

"Yes. Oh, please take me aboard your vessel. No want to go with Malay. Malay bad man; 'fraid he some time get knife and quick kill me."

"You speak good English for an islander," said the captain.

"Yes. Long time ago Englishman come ashore here and learn me how speak, and a little how write."

"Why are you afraid of the Malay? There are plenty of other young females around to protect you."

"No girls. Malay live here."

"Father, mother, brother, all gone," she said, and a couple of tears rolled from her eyes.

Then she raised her beautiful orbs heavenward, and, with a look of touching sorrow, crossed her hands on her bosom.

The captain was much affected, as also were the seamen. Such childlike simplicity, such charming naiveté!

The skipper helped her into the boat, and took her aboard.

"I will carry her to New York with me," said he to his mate, "and she shall have a home with my mother."

At this, Sibylia pressed her cheek to the captain's shoulder, and then kissed his hand, to show her gratitude.

"God bless!" she ejaculated fervently.

Meanwhile a long, sloop-rigged boat, with a lateen sail, and evidently filled with men, rounded the north point of the island, and stood along on the starboard tack at right angles with the brig.

"Suspicious!" ejaculated the mate, while Sibylia clasped her hands.

"The Malays!" she exclaimed; "the pirates coming now; look out!"

"They cannot fetch us," said the captain, "unless we should have a change of wind."

Soon a fog rose, screening the Malay craft from sight. When it cleared, three hours later, the lateen sail bore far away, apparently no bigger than a sapling.

Sibylia now came on deck, and threw herself upon her knees before the skipper, with the moonlight falling full upon her lovely countenance.

"Ah, captain," she murmured, "we must go back to island. Me leave tappa—cloth—ashore; forget to bring away."

"Never mind," said the captain, "I will give you some cloth. I have some aboard, as good, I doubt not, as that which you left."

Sibylia colored, and after a moment's hesitation, replied: "Me want my cloth, because it was present from my brother—no other cloth so good as that. Please let me go in canoe."

"No, no; if you must go, why, I will wear ship and stand in close to the island."

The girl thanked him, and with shining eyes watched the brig as it came round. The breeze was blowing fresh, and in the course of a few hours the *Centurion* was within a mile of the island.

Meanwhile the lateen sail of the pirate vessel was now visible a league to windward.

"Look out for pirate," said Sibylia anxiously; "better go into bay behind rocks"—pointing directly ahead—"and pirate not see."

"A good plan," said the captain; "but is the water deep enough there to float us?"

"Yes, plenty deep," answered Sibylia, coloring.

The skipper braced forward, and the vessel soon was dashing along toward the bay at the rate of ten knots.

"Now me will go!" exclaimed the girl; and gliding over the side, she descended into her canoe.

To the surprise of all hands, however, instead of directing her light vessel shoreward, she began paddling out to sea. In fact, she was going straight for the pirate vessel, and must soon meet it!

"What can that mean?" cried the first mate to the captain.

"I don't know, unless she wants to fetch the farther point of the island," replied the skipper.

As he spoke, a sudden, grinding noise was heard along the brig's keel!

"We are grounding!" roared the mate.

"Hard down with that wheel!" shouted the captain to the helmsman.

Before the order could be obeyed, the crashing of the keel against sunken rocks was heard, down went the foremast by the board, and over went the poor brig upon her beam ends, with the water bubbling and boiling over her bows.

Instantly the captain had his boats lowered, and endeavored to tow the brig clear, but in vain.

"Catch me trusting to a woman about nautical matters again!" he exclaimed. "My craft is a gone case, all from my taking that island girl's advice."

"In my opinion, she knew all about the shallowness of the bay!" cried the mate, "and did this to betray us! See there!"

He pointed seaward, glancing in which direction, the skipper now saw Sibylia being helped aboard the pirate vessel from her canoe.

"Aye! betrayed we are, sure enough!" cried the skipper; "that girl was evidently in league with the pirates, and was sent to lure us here."

He boarded his vessel, and armed his crew of twenty men with handspikes, crowbars, revolvers, whaling-spades, and other implements.

Then he walked forward and loaded an old ten-pounder just abaft the windlass.

The pirate was now within a mile of the brig, and the dark forms of her savage crew upon the knightheads, in the forerigging, and about the rails, were distinctly visible in the moonlight. Watching them with his night-glass, the captain estimated their number at one hundred or more, and perceived that they were all armed to the teeth.

"Now, Heaven help us, if those rascals get afoul of us," he said to his mate. "We cannot resist so many."

He looked at the ten-pounder reflectively.

"Everything depends upon that," said he. "One shot from this gun, if directed right, will sink the Malays' proa, and save us. I have a wife and child at home, and do not care to have my throat cut by yonder rascals."

"So have I a wife and child," said the mate, "and my life is of great value to them."

There were many other married men aboard, who had left families at home, and the closed teeth and flashing eyes of these brave fellows proclaimed a resolute purpose to fight to the last.

The captain glanced round him, and tears came to his eyes. Then he again looked at his single gun and sighed heavily.

"If there was only somebody aboard used to handling guns," said he, "there might be some hope for us."

"Tom Chuck!" said the mate; "I have heard said that he served in a man-o'-war, and that there never was a better gunner than he; what a pity that he is below in the forecastle, sick and dying with rheumatism."

"Not so," answered a feeble voice; "I've come up, sir, to p'int that gun!"

All turned in the direction of the voice, and saw crawling slowly along on his hands and knees, the invalid Tom Chuck.

"It's no use, Tom; there isn't the strength of a flea in your arm," said the mate—"you can do nothing!"

Even as he spoke, Tom fell upon his side, writhing with his rheumatic pains, and too feeble to rise.

"Here she comes, the proa!" was now echoed on all sides, as the pirate, with her dark-skinned crew, came dashing on toward the brig.

"It's all up with us," said the mate. "It only remains for us to sell our lives as dearly as possible."

There was a groan from Tom Chuck. He half-raised himself, turning his eyes heavenward.

"He is dying," said a number of the spectators, as his eyes rolled in his head.

"No, no; not quite yet," groaned Tom; "not until I've p'inted that gun!"

He staggered to his feet, but unable to stand, he fell to the deck. His face trembled, his eyes were blazing with zeal.

Rising, however, with a superhuman effort, he raised himself on his knees, and in a deeply solemn voice that thrilled to the hearts of all, he exclaimed:

"Now, Heaven help me point that gun before I die, and save my shipmates!"

As he spoke, his eyes lighted up, and a sudden wonderful strength seemed to revive his drooping frame. With glowing cheeks and compressed lips, he sprang up, staggered forward to the gun, and with steady hands depressed it.

"Quick! the match!" he exclaimed; and the lighted instrument was no sooner in his hand than he applied it.

The thunder of the piece reverberated through the island hills—the smoke cleared—where was the proa?

Her hull was no longer visible; nothing remained above water except one of her masts, to which many of her dark-skinned crew clung, shrieking and yelling like fiends. The shot had told well—had crashed through the pirate's bottom and sunk her!

But even with the discharge of his gun, the spirit of Tom Chuck had flown from its shell!

I have only to add that such of the pirate crew as were not drowned made their way to the shore, where they were subsequently attacked and taken prisoners by the islanders. The brig was got off the rocks at high water in the morning, without damage, when the captain set sail with a fair wind. He had not proceeded far when he picked up a floating body—that of the beautiful, but false-hearted Sibylia, who, he subsequently learned, had been the wife of the Malay pirate captain.

CRIMINALS MEN OF SCIENCE.

The methods employed by criminals have "improved." They have become scientific, most scientific. The criminal of to-day handles chloroform, opium, morphia, with all the cleverness of a physician.

Again, the tools used by the modern jail-bird are unrivaled masterpieces. One amazing proof of the scientific knowledge of the modern criminal and his keenness in keeping abreast of modern discoveries lies in the following fact: Recently in Marseilles the huge safe of a bank was rapidly opened by means of a complicated apparatus which had only been invented by a prominent engineer ten months previously!

But the detective also avails himself of scientific discovery. Formerly in cases of forgery, for instance, a drop of water was placed on the forged words. If the paper had been scratched and its size removed the water was immediately sucked in; if the paper had not been scratched, the drop remained for a while on the top. This process was primitive, and spoiled the document.

Nowadays the suspicious paper is photographed and on the proof the marks of scratching are easily detected by clear differences in the color. Photography is used also in the case of forgeries made by means of chemicals.

When a heap of burned documents is found in the fireplace thin sheets of glass are inserted between the burned papers. As soon as one sheet is on the glass it is rendered less brittle by means of a special liquid and it is unfolded and photographed. The process is repeated with every sheet, and after a few hours all the documents are easily read.

A process formerly used for the classification of blood-stains consisted in examining them under the microscope, and from the appearance of the red globules the investigators would draw their conclusions as to the nature of the stain. Unfortunately this examination gave no result when the blood-stains were not recent.

To-day a more scientific method is used. The stain is washed; a few drops of the water used are poured into a tube containing some specific serum from a rabbit inoculated with human blood. When the solution of water produces in the serum a fine deposit and gives a misty appearance to the liquid one can be positively certain that the blood-stains were human.

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